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L E T T E R S

TO THE

INHABITANTS

OF THE

TOWN AND LORDSHIP

OF

N E W Y.

S R E S

STATION

TOWN AND COUNTRY

NEW YORK

L E T T E R S

TO THE

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OF THE

TOWN AND LORDSHIP

OF

N E W R Y.

BY

JOSEPH POLLOCK, ESQ.

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D U B L I N :

PRINTED BY P. BYRNE, GRAFTON-STREET.

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IT may seem that many of the facts relative to the late Dungannon Convention, if not the whole history of it, contained in the following sheets, are either too long passed; or too insignificant in themselves, to be worth recording, or presenting in this manner to the public. Nothing is more possible, surely, than that a writer of any kind should deceive himself as to the value both of his subject and work. But the writer of these letters is much deceived if, whatever apology may be necessary for particular passages, written when they were intended for a much earlier and less extensive production, the whole chain of facts here given, and the observations interspersed, will not be found, by either a philosophical or a safe practical politician, to be worthy of attention, as serving to ~~illustrate~~ illustrate the opinions, spirit, history, and *political necessities* of this country,

ADVERTISEMENT.

country, if not of the times. The writing was, perhaps unnecessarily suspended for a time, in consequence of *doubts*, whether certain criminal prosecutions, expected early in this month, would not make the publication of parts of these letters either improper, or likely in some manner to bear hard on an individual, for whom, whether he has misconducted himself or not in the matter alluded to, the writer entertains a personal respect.

LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

GENTLEMEN,

HAVING thought it my duty to accept the honour of your Delegation to Dungannon, though not insensible of the private inconvenience and anxiety that must attend it, I am induced, from the same motives, to employ such part of my time as I have been able to spare, after my return to town, in explaining the principles which directed my conduct as your Delegate, accompanying the explanation with such observations as the subject, and the peculiar crisis, seem to require. I do so, not merely to defend myself against certain attacks and misrepresentations, not perfectly indirect, with which I have been honoured, in *newspapers* and *flying sheets*, and which conversation, I find, has handsomely circulated and

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improved

improved on. Were this my only object, I should probably think it both safer and pleasanter to trust the defence of my character to time, than to risk even the appearance of a vain intrusion on public attention, or the farther exposure of my name to misconception, or interested malevolence. But a duty superior to personal prudence or delicacy, that which I owe to the *peace*, and, I think, the *liberty* of my country, seems to command me at this moment to speak *opinions* which I feel myself compelled to entertain, and to detail *facts* which appear to me a subject for serious consideration.

The Ulster Delegates have declared, that a *National Convention* may probably become *necessary*, and have taken measures, in that case, to concert the *means*. The same spirits that called Ulster, will, if their agency prevail, assemble the Delegates of the Nation. What may, or may not, be the consequence of such an assembly, convened at such a time—how far it may tend to ensure or to endanger, to confirm or to destroy, the peace or the liberty of the nation, I believe few rational and honest men will pretend to foresee. But this, at least, seems clear;—that when a measure thus pregnant with good or with ill is proposed, and becomes probable, no facts or observations can be unimportant, that tend to

shew to the nation, what seem to be the prevailing opinions, spirit, and temper of the Province of Ulster;—none can be unimportant, that tend to excite each man, in every part of the nation, to be prudent, and vigilant, and determined, in his own post or station; none that may tend to *warn* both government and people of the *consequences* that may flow from intemperance, rashness, or passion of any kind, or that may tend to impress on the public mind the necessity of weighing, at this awful moment, most deliberately and deeply, men and their measures, principles and their probable consequences.

On such an occasion, away with all private tenderness for individuals, all personal deference for bodies of men, all enthusiasm on the anniversary of EIGHTY-TWO, and all the wit-engendered and high-sounding hypocrisies which we are exposed to, about the SINAI of the people, and the holy and irresistible *oracles* of DUNGANNON!

I *worship* not the people; for I do not intend either to mislead or betray them. I will not lick the dust under their feet; for I wish not to mount on their shoulders, or to plant my heel in their neck. I respect the *rights* of the people, for this plain reason, if for no other, that I am, and ever must be, one of them. Not over-industrious

in the arts of rising, fimple as I fee them to be, and within reach of my hand as I have known the means, I have not a patron on earth, to whom I can pretend to fay I look for prospect of a favour; or from whom the conduct I have held, and now hold, seems, in my judgment, the most probable means of procuring one. I recollect also, as well as other gentlemen, and have, perhaps, as much personal interest in recollecting, where Dungannon *stood*, and where I wish it for ever to stand, in name and in honour. But I would prove my respect for Dungannon, by preventing its *name* from becoming the occasion of mischief, and my love for the people, by an honest endeavour to preserve and to promote their *happiness*. Their happiness I consider as of infinitely more importance, than their *occasional* and *indigested opinions*—and where these opinions seem, in their consequences, to go to a hazard of their very existence as a free nation, I will then tell them *truth*, and what I *think* truth, though I should emigrate.

But it is not to the people alone, that truth should now be told. Government seem to have as much occasion for information on some points, as many of them can have, upon others. They should know better, perhaps, the temper and spirit

spirit of the people whom they are bound to serve. They should be warned, that, though there are men, even among their opposers, who will dare to confess, as I do—that *they ought now to be strong*, ought now to be able to repel invasion, and, if necessary, to repress sedition ;—yet, *if their wisdom go not hand in hand with their strength*, if they shew not a disposition to concede what *ought* to be conceded—if they shew a resolution to govern by *power alone*—if they distrust, and would disarm, and would keep disarmed, *the whole people*—the innocent, and the moderate, and the well-affected, as well as the turbulent, or those who may be disposed to sedition, or to a revolution—if they would irritate, if they do not soothe, the public mind—the *power* so to govern (supposing it their's, at this moment) *cannot remain for ever*. Time and chance, we see, happen to human things. Nothing seems now, in fact, impossible. Men must now be held by “ the bands of a man,” not the fetters of a slave. They must be governed by their minds, not subjugated in their persons. Government will look to this, I trust, nay I believe they will ;—else may they soon cease to be a government, or may reign over a bloody desert.—If such things should happen, it will be but a poor consolation to the survivors, on either side, to be able to say, *you*
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*the government, who "refused and resisted redress," are answerable—or you, the people, who improperly, as to time, or manner, or extent of what you called Redress, demanded it—you—you will be answerable, "to posterity, to your country, and to God, for all the crimes and calamities that have followed!"** Let us, if we can, avert the impending calamities. Let no party *contribute to bring them on*—merely, because they *may* afterwards defend themselves in a school of metaphysicians. The conduct of us all must be defended before man and his Maker. We must answer for it, according to *our view of probabilities*, and the caution we exercise, and the pains we take, to obtain of those probabilities, a view both *just and comprehensive*.

* See resolutions of the Friends of Parliamentary Reform in Belfast ; in which is the following passage, marked as here given :

"We have resolved, that whatever may be the result of the present crisis, we shall be blameless: And that neither our rulers nor our fellow-subjects, shall have cause to accuse us either of *intemperance* or *remissness*. But we must at the same time solemnly declare, that, if the just demands of the people be despised, those who *refuse* and those who *resist* redress, will be answerable to posterity, to their country, and to God, for all the crimes and calamities that may follow."

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The late Ulster Convention was called under no very happy omens. Summoned, originally, under a recommendation in "most questionable shape,"—one that seemed to many no "spirit of health," nor messenger of peace,* promoted, afterwards by something not very unlike manœuvre,†
 confessed,

* The address of the UNITED IRISHMEN of DUBLIN to THE VOLUNTEERS OF IRELAND, beginning, "*Citizen Soldiers*," and containing among other things not to be passed by, this apostrophe: "We have thought it our duty to *Speak*:—ANSWER us by ACTIONS;—you have taken TIME *for consideration*. Fourteen long years are elapsed since "the rise of your associations; and in 1782, did you imagine "that in 1792, this nation would still remain UNREPRESENTED? &c." So that, it seems, this nation has no representation, not even an *inadequate* one! Numerically, it may not;—but the question is, whether or not it *has* one, and *how far* it has one, *politically*, or in *necessary political consequence and effect*: a point which the people are called on well to consider, before, (*à la Française*) they call their Citizen Soldiers into *action*.

† The Belfast Committee of twenty-one, appointed to correspond, in order to procure Provincial Conventions, in their circular letter, published in the Northern Star on the 2d of January last, apologize for appointing a day, and at so short a notice; for the county of Antrim Meeting

confessed, it should seem, by some of its warmest advocates, to be premature—and attended by many,

ing at Ballymena—but “ they trust that the *necessity* will be deemed a sufficient excuse, “ *their brethren of Londonderry having proposed* the 15th of February to be the day on which the Provincial Convention should be convened at Dungannon; and, *not wishing to throw any obstacle* in the way, or to *counteract them*, (their brethren of Derry) in the smallest degree, but, on the contrary, anxious to *coincide* with them, and to *preserve their Union, &c.*”—these gentlemen call together the county of Antrim: And a number of the same gentlemen, assembled at the meeting they called at Ballymena, on the 14th of January, chose [their Delegates to represent them at Dungannon, on the 15th of February, “ the day mentioned,” say they, “ by the inhabitants of Derry.”

Now, *after all these public assertions*, it will seem extraordinary, that, *in fact*, the inhabitants of Derry had *not* then called, or even recommended, a Dungannon Meeting;—that, on the contrary, on the 21st of December preceding, they had not resolved any thing on that measure; but had called a meeting of their three adjoining counties to Derry, for the 25th of January following, in order *then* to determine what circumstances might require; and that, previous to the meeting of Belfast on the 26th of December, and to the publication of the above letter of the Belfast Committee, one of the most zealous members of that committee had in his possession, a copy of the Derry Resolutions of the 21st of December, in which

many, I do believe, rather in the hope of preventing some ill, than the expectation of achieving much good—if it had ended as our splendid preface* seems to promise, and had proved itself the manly and legitimate offspring of *eighty-two*, I should have joined, with all my soul, in a Political Thanksgiving, nay, should

which a Dunganon meeting *was not even mentioned*. I can scarce suppose that the committee did not see these resolutions of Derry, or had not been informed of them, by some other means. I may misapprehend this matter perhaps—but if I do not, I must observe; that though, undoubtedly, *the Saints* should have the privilege of dispensing occasionally with the rules of vulgar morality, *for the public good*—yet a frequent or indiscriminate use of this high prerogative, might be the occasion of *scandal*, or might be *thought* to give a bad example to the *ungodly*.

“ * DUNGANNON MEETING, FIFTEENTH FEBRUARY, 1793.—We, the Delegates of the Province of ULSTER, appointed at separate meetings, assembled at DUNGANNON, on the anniversary of that day which first freed IRELAND from foreign legislation; being fully acquainted with the sentiments of our particular districts, declare the sense of *the people*, in the following terms : ”

I ventured at the close of the meeting, when this *preface* was moved, to advise against it, and to beg gentlemen would consider the maxim—“ *Non fumum ex fulgore, &c.* ” But, by this time, it had been circulated, that I was a sort of an unhappy *aristocrate*, or a *disaffected*, or a *malignant*, &c. &c.

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have addressed (I speak not irreverently) a *Te Deum*, even to Chance and to Nonsense. Perhaps I am myself as yet in some delusion, and this meeting may produce more than it promises. If nothing but what is conceived in wisdom were ever crowned with success, Heaven help mankind! For me, I shall cordially thank the man who proves me in error, and had rather be confuted by *the event*, than pass for the Seer or Sage of Ulster. In the mean time, the *consequences* being yet in the womb of futurity—I have to do only with the proceedings themselves, and the spirit shewn, as I think, at the meeting. And as I may here be conceived to take more than a becoming liberty with the conduct of the Committee appointed to prepare the business for the Convention, I beg it may be understood, that, in the Committee, I saw several gentlemen deservedly of the highest character for integrity, and of very considerable natural and cultivated ability. To some of these gentlemen, if taken separately, and in moments of undisturbed reflection, I believe the whole business of the meeting might, much for our credit, have been trusted.—But it has been often observed, that the wisdom shewn by a body of men, does not always bear a just proportion to that of even the majority of individuals who compose it; and if (as I think
somebody

somebody has said) three hundred *Newtons* and *Lockes* thrown into one assembly, might act there as so many drivelers and blockheads, it is not clearly a miracle, that thirty of *us*, *Solons* and *Lycurguses* of baronies and parishes—should not produce or tack together, in less than a day, and amidst the misunderstandings and confusions of debate, a code of laws truly imperial, commanding present respect, and likely to stand the test of time. For my part, though I do not profess myself a perfect Solomon, I own I lost occasionally, and without afterwards recovering it perfectly, much of my own great wisdom: other gentlemen know best what happened to themselves.

The acceptance of the Delegation made it my duty to think of a plan of proceedings to be proposed to the Convention; and, knowing myself not absolutely infallible, and entertaining the *antiquated*, and perhaps *aristocratic* idea, that so long as we *have* a Parliament, the Friends of the People, in and out of it, should, wherever possible, consult and co-operate, I made it my business to get a little advice from two gentlemen who appeared (if any men in the kingdom could) above all exception, and interested not merely in

the welfare, but the glory of their country.* Unluckily their time was so much employed, that hints were almost all I could get from them, and I was obliged to trust too much to myself: but,

* Mr. Grattan and Mr. Forbes. Having, perhaps imprudently, mentioned the names of these gentlemen in the Committee, and taking now the liberty of doing so to the public, I think it my duty to say; that, in respect to this publication of mine, whatever be its demerits, either in design or execution, *they*, (and indeed all persons with whom I have any political connection) are *utterly innocent*. I might certainly have had the advice of those gentlemen on it; but following, and determined to follow, my own strong opinions and feelings on the occasion, and chusing that, if I happened to commit any great error, *the public* should not suffer in this way, at least, of having imputation or suspicion thrown on men supporting a high public character, I resolved that the *hazards* should be *all my own*. This conduct I felt the more necessary, as some opinions of mine, in a hasty letter to Belfast, advising against the call of an Ulster Convention, at least in the *then* state of the public mind, were strangely misunderstood, and of course misrepresented, by the few who saw it; and the supposed heresies and false doctrines of it, were very publicly imputed not only to *me*, the only criminal, but to a most respectable and truly independent society, of which I have the honour to be a member—I mean the Friends of the Constitution, Liberty and Peace. The letter so misunderstood I have now in my possession, through the favour of the gentleman to whom it was addressed, and am ready to shew it to any gentleman, whose curiosity may be of the kind deserving or proper to be gratified.

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had it been otherwise, and had I been enabled to say, "these are not my propositions, but those of your friends—in Parliament;" I fear they would only have been thence the more mal-treated and abused, and the unfortunate proposer, only the more *jostled and hustled*, as an aristocratic emissary. For your democratic leaders of the present day, possessing the throne, and reigning in right of *the people*, are apt to entertain a most laudable jealousy not only of all division of their empire, which might be sensible, but of all interference by way of advice, which, with due submission, seems rather nonsense.—Whether it be, that some of those gentlemen know themselves to be *despots*, and therefore bear nothing near them in the form of a *brother democrat*,* or that they feel themselves to be *pretenders* or *usurpers*, and that the approach of any thing like common-sense or common honesty, looks like an attack upon *their title*, it is not for me to determine. But whatever be the cause, the fact is certain; that *some* of these gentlemen have long since laid down this maxim, "We will have *no leader*;" and they tell the people, I suppose, whom *they* lead, the same thing—and the people believe them!—

* "Bear, like the Turk, no brother near his throne."

POPE.

Now,

Now, all this might be very right, if the people were *all in all*, if our constitution were, in short, a *perfect* democracy; but as that is not yet the case, (whatever it ought to be) as Parliament is still *something* in our constitution, and members of Parliament have still some power, and are able, at times, if willing, to communicate some little information, were it only as to *the expedient*, and the *practicable* and the *best and readiest means* of accomplishing a popular purpose,—I hold that these gentlemen-leaders are not wise (unless their only object be to raise a commotion, and to serve *themselves*) in rejecting, with so much indignation, *all* connection with the *soi-disant representatives* of the people, and with those, in particular, who have proved themselves the friends of reform. I know not how, unless by some infection from opinions of this kind, to account for a pious *lecture* or gentle *admonition*, which I received from a worthy Christian Divine of the Committee, for giving them “information at *second-hand*,” which could not possibly have been given to them at first-hand, and the *truth* of which I believe no man doubted. I had thought I was doing no more than my duty to the Committee, and to the cause of the people, in which we were all engaged—to communicate to the *delegates* of the people, what cer-
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tain of their *parliamentary* friends *conceived* to have injured, or to be likely to serve, the cause. —“ *Stultus ego putavi!*”

But I committed a still more unpardonable fault than that of imparting facts to the Committee: I gave them *my own opinion* of certain other facts within their own knowledge. In explaining the object of my propositions, I had, with a candour not very usual, I apprehend, in either politicians or impostors, made some remarks on the principles, tendency, and probable effects of *certain publications*, which had been disseminated among the people, and, among the rest, I mentioned a late address from the town of Belfast.

“ Ex illo fluere, ac retro sublapſa referri

“ Spes — ! fractæ vires—averſa deæ mens!

“ *Nec dubiis, ea ſigna dedit TRITONIA morſus.*”

From that unlucky moment, the preſiding divinity of Dungannon could ſcarce himſelf have ſaved me. Pallas, offended Pallas, took ſo many unexpected ſhapes—of the orator and the reaſoner, *the moderate*, and the *enragé*—ſhe ſpoke, too, ſo many languages, in their gradations, from that kind of violence which a gentleman deſpiſes,

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to that insinuation which a man cannot well meet, because it meets not him—that, unprepared as I was for such a reception, unconscious, if ever man was, of deserving it, and not immediately conceiving the causes (either those mentioned, or others which I have since discovered) I found myself, after some debate, approaching at times to altercation, obliged to yield to the current, and to content myself, as some others did from the beginning, with the mere endeavour (however in itself disagreeable and disgusting) to palliate errors not to be prevented; in which attempt, modest as it seems, I found myself exposed to misconception and prejudice.

I now subjoin the resolutions which I proposed, and those adopted by the Convention, in one view, and contrasted to each other for the more easy comparison, as well as their different nature and tendency will permit. Their second and third resolutions are, for that purpose, transposed. The numbers, however, shew the original order. —The emphatic words in the Convention resolutions are given, as published in the Belfast Newsletter by Mr. Henry Joy, who having acted, after the call of the meeting, in the different capacities of Delegate, Committee-man, Secretary, Printer, and Historiographer, to the Convention,

must

must know, if any man can, the sense of the resolutions intended to be enforced on the public mind. By that sense, I shall try them; though, in fact, it but confirms and points the unequivocal meaning of the words. By my propositions too let me be tried—behold whether they be the propositions of a traitor, or no!

THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

1. Resolved, That we are cordially attached to THE FORM and ORIGINAL PRINCIPLES of the British Constitution; as uniting the advantages, and tempering the defects, of the three simple modes of government, *monarchy—aristocracy—*and *democracy*.

3. That we highly disapprove of REPUBLICAN FORMS OF GOVERNMENT, as applied to this kingdom; and we reject with abhorrence those principles which have a tendency to dissolve all government, and destroy every wise and salutary distinction in society.

2. That

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS:

1. That, from education, habit and conviction, we are warmly attached to the principles and form of *the British Constitution*, as uniting the advantages, and tempering the defects, of the three simple modes of Government—Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy, pure or representative.—We are attached to this our *rightful* Constitution, for reasons numerous and weighty. Because we have felt, nor do we think there is a single description of men in this island that has not felt, many and enviable blessings, derived even from its imperfect, and defaced, and abused copy—our *actual* Constitution. Because, as far as our observations on history, and on the extraordinary transactions of our own times, have extended, we think we have the strong evidence of FACTS for *the opinion*—that no Government ever yet existed, that no Government, tried by the great searcher, *time*, now exists, less tending to decay, corruption, or convulsion, or possessing more the native power of easy self-renovation and progressive improvement ;—none so accommodating itself to, yet so well regulating, the ever-varying and ever-restless desires of man ;—none so certainly rewarding industry and integrity, so powerfully animating talent, so usefully restraining the power and the pride of wealth, rendering

THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

2. That we view with the warmest affection and gratitude, the paternal regard of our Sovereign, to the loyal subjects of this kingdom: manifested in his directing the attention of Parliament, to the depressed circumstances of the *Roman Catholics of Ireland*, and his recommending the adoption of such measures as may unite all orders of the people, in their attachment to the Constitution.

4. That

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

vice so little hurtful, folly so perfectly innocent, and ambition not only so harmless but a virtue; —no Government, in fine, so possessing itself in *stability and vigour*, nor extending to *the great body of the people* so much true liberty, so perfect, so proud an independence, so much affluence, peace and happiness.

2. That we are bound by affection and interest to our confederated brethren of Great Britain, and to that illustrious house, which, deriving the crown of these kingdoms from the *gift* of the people, must cherish a sense of the *tenure*, and remain attached to the *duties*, by which that crown is held and dignified: Nor do we feel less personal gratitude to our present beloved Sovereign, to whose paternal disposition and attention, the constitution and the people of this country are more indebted, than, perhaps, to the whole line of his Majesties royal predecessors.

3. That though we are thus attached to our Constitution, to the family and person of our Sovereign, and to our brethren and friends of Great Britain, we are thence but the more feelingly alive to, and the more determined, by all
lawful

THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

4. That it is the constitutional right of the people, and essential to *the very being* of their liberty, to be FULLY and FAIRLY represented in their own House of Parliament.

5. That *the present state of the representation*, in the House of Commons is *partial and inadequate*, subversive of the rights of the people, and—AN INTOLERABLE GRIEVANCE.

6. That it appears to us, that several LORDS, spiritual and temporal, as well as COMMONERS, direct the return of more than TWO HUNDRED members of the Irish House of Commons, leaving not *one-third* of the representation to *the people*.

7. That it is the opinion of this meeting, that all boroughs should be disfranchised, and representation established on FAIR and RATIONAL principles, by extending the Elective Franchise equal-

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

lawful means, to pursue the redress of, THE PECULIAR GRIEVANCES OF OUR COUNTRY, those which are THE SOURCE OF ALL THE REST.

RESOLVED THEREFORE.

4. That the present state of the Representation of the People in the House of Commons is *inadequate*, and A GRIEVANCE.

PROPOSED

THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

ly to persons of every religious persuasion, by elections frequently repeated, and by a distribution of representatives, proportioned to the *population* and *wealth* of the country.

8. That we have seen with satisfaction the House of Commons *pledge* themselves to an immediate and fair enquiry into the state of the representation; and we conjure them, as they regard their own *faith* and *honour*, the safety of our invaluable Constitution, and the restoration of the public mind to composure and confidence, to persevere in such enquiry with zeal and steadiness; in order that a complete and radical reform may be speedily effectuated.

9. That deeming a complete Parliamentary Reform essential to the *peace, liberty and happiness of the people*, we do most solemnly pledge ourselves to each other, and to our country, that we will never abandon the pursuit of this important object, but zealously and steadily persevere, until a *full and fair* representation of the people shall be unequivocally obtained.

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PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

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5. That

THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

10. That we consider the immediate and entire emancipation of the Roman Catholics as a measure indispensably necessary to the safety and happiness of this country.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

5. That the influence of the minister, from the number of places and pensions dispensed to members of the House of Commons is become excessive, and is—A GRIEVANCE.

6. That the Penal Laws against Catholics, having *almost* deprived our people of a country, and our country, of course, of a people, leave this island exposed to all the machinations, dangers and desolation possible to be apprehended from ministerial tyranny, from popular discontent, and from foreign invasion, and have been, and are at this moment —A GRIEVANCE.

7. **RESOLVED**, That, in consequence of the above grievances, the people of this kingdom do not enjoy the benefits and privileges intended by the Constitution, nor that opinion and sense of security which are essentially necessary to the existence and enjoyment of liberty.

8. That, in order to redress the said grievances, the abolition of the Penal Laws against Catholics, and a radical and effectual Reform of the Re-

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THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

11. That

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

presentation of the People in Parliament, are
INDISPENSABLY NECESSARY.

9. That we think too highly of the power and resources of a people, at once united, determined and wise, not to believe, and believing, we think it necessary, at this peculiar crisis, to DECLARE, that this nation is far indeed from being reduced to the desperate alternative, of *unlimited submission* or *anarchy and war*. We think that a redress of these grievances may be obtained, and that speedily; *by means equally peaceable and safe*—by means, which levy no war, which threaten no commotion, which offer not even a constructive violence to authority; [and from which, if war *could* arise, it would be the open, undisguised, and unprovoked war of a *minister*, or a *cabal*, against THE PEOPLE—a war which would unite all hearts, and raise every arm, in favour of freedom—a war to which mercenaries would be unequal, under which treasuries would sink, and in which conquest itself would, to the surviving despots, be ruin.]*—The means, we think, are these;—addresses to the People, petitions to his Majesty and Parliament, framed by such meetings as may appear best qualified to explain, and procure at-

* See letter III.

THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

11. That a power be vested in a Committee, consisting of thirty persons, for the purpose of re-convoking this assembly, (as occasion may arise) until the constituent body is pleased to return another representation of the province. AND THAT, on a recommendation by letter, addressed to William Sharman, Esq; at Moira, and signed
by

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

tention to, public grievances;—and by affociations of the people, using that *private* and *personal* liberty which the law cannot, without ceasing to be law, deny them—the liberty of chusing what *commodities* they shall individually consume, what description of *persons* they shall, on certain occasions in the commerce of life, individually employ, encourage, and hold intercourse with, and what support they shall, by their habits of expence, contribute to *the revenue*, or to *the current expences of administration*.

10. That a petition, from freeholders attending this meeting, be presented to the House of Commons, expressing our earnest wishes, that the House, in its wisdom, will effectually redress the same, by granting to the Catholics equal liberty with Protestants, and by giving to the nation a Reform in Parliament.

11. That this meeting be adjourned to the
day of next

THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

by seven members of the Committee, he shall, by circular letter to the rest, procure the sense of a majority; and if the measure of a *provincial* meeting be by them approved of, he shall forthwith issue a summons, in the name of the Committee, for that purpose.

[Here followed the names of the Committee.]

12. That the above-named Committee be authorized to communicate with the other provinces of this kingdom, at this important crisis, and to concert proper means of calling a *National Convention*, at a future day, should circumstances render such a meeting unavoidably necessary.

13. Resolved, that we behold with indignation, an intention of embodying a MILITIA in this kingdom; a measure which can only have *ministerial influence* for its object; which we deem *burdensome*, and totally *unnecessary*.

14. That feeling our obligations to our brave, and disinterested protectors, THE VOLUNTEERS OF IRELAND—we cheerfully embrace the opportunity

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PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

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THE CONVENTION RESOLUTIONS.

tunity of returning them our warmest acknowledgments. We most earnestly exhort them, to persevere in that line of conduct which has procured them the thanks and confidence of the nation. We trust that they will increase their numbers; improve their discipline; and long continue the unbought defenders of the *peace, liberty and constitution* of their country.

After the Chairman had left the chair, a few only of the Delegates having *chosen* to leave the house, the following resolution was entered into, and published *separately*:

At a numerous meeting of gentlemen, inhabitants of the counties of Antrim, Monaghan, Tyrone, Down, Derry, Donegall and Carrickfergus, held at Dungannon the 16th February, 1793.

Resolved *unanimously*, That it is with infinite concern we behold this kingdom likely to be involved in the horrors and expences of a *foreign war*; a war by which, as a nation, we can gain nothing; but, on the contrary, *must* expose our commerce to depredation, and our country to unprovoked hostility.

L E T T E R II.

I MENTIONED that I explained my propositions to the Committee ; indeed I did explain their whole scope and object, and that of each proposition in particular, perhaps too clearly, certainly with more than political candour. When the Mr. Joy I have mentioned, (whom, in return for the favour of acquainting me with my delegation by letter, lest I should not hear of it as soon from those who appointed me, I had informed that I should attend the meeting) came to read *his* propositions, he announced himself by observing, that “ he *had expected* some to be *too milky*, and others too extravagant or violent ;—and *he had not been disappointed.*” By the too milky, in other words, *spiritless* propositions, Mr. Joy did not deny that he meant to describe *mine*. Now, Mr. Joy, for some time past, and till very lately indeed, had been what is called, discredited, in his own *warm* country, as a *moderate*—one profoundly respecting the wisdom and justice of Parliament, and leaving, as I recollect, *all* to that wisdom and justice, in *certain* points, though perhaps, in others, he was

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willing enough to assist them with a little of his own. It has even been said, I cannot affirm how truly, that his newspaper also had been a little discredited; and that a new planet (but, 'tis said, no *Georgium Sidus*) "the Northern Star," whose directors, or presiding spirits, had the honour of a little notice lately from our political Herschel, vulgarly called the Attorney General, had been eclipsing somewhat the good old, steady, cautious light of *his* established, regularly-moving luminary, *the News-letter*. The attack, therefore, of a gentleman of this description, one so very moderate, and so very cautious, and supposed to know so well, upon every occasion, what subjects, and persons, he made observations on, was, I confess, unexpected, and, judging by some of its probable effects, I might, perhaps, call it alarming. When accused by *him* of a want of political spirit, what must the high-flying conceive of me?—No less, surely, than "*Hunc tu, Romane, caveto.*"—I was the more surprised, as I really thought I had gone, in all conscience, far enough, in seasoning, with certain political pepper, parts of my propositions which seemed to require it, lest the temperance, and flower mode of proceeding, recommended, should be mistaken by the people for disaffection, coldness, or timidity. I thought at the moment, and still think, that I had gone farther also in
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real strength of measures, than Mr. Joy himself :—but I found afterwards that, if I had gone farther in some respects, I had fallen short of him, as I wish to do, in others.

The first resolution of the Convention goes to attachment to the *British constitution*.—For adopting on this point, and for promulgating, if one may say so, to the people, the most explicit, the strongest, and the warmest declarations that truth could warrant, I thought I had given reasons more than sufficient :—from the fears entertained by many, even of the old and steady friends of reform, that some of the modern and younger reformers in the North, wished for a *revolution* ; from the *almost unqualified dissatisfaction* which certain publications had tended to disseminate, with respect even to the theory and principles of our Constitution ; which dissatisfaction, if permitted to spread and take root in the minds of the people, might be attended with consequences most serious ; and, as I recollect, from the possibility, that if we appeared so much dissatisfied with our condition, the French, with whom we were at war, might think of offering us *their protection*, and their assistance in *reforming* our Constitution, as they had done to *Belgium*. After all these reasons, of which I only pretend to give the substance,

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not the very expressions, and, to which I did not hear, as I recollect, a single answer even attempted, it did not mortify, but I confess it surprised me, to hear it proposed, by a worthy, but, I think, much too zealous delegate from Belfast, that we should adopt a proposition, from another gentleman which professed that good-sort-of common-place, ‘*cut-and-dry*’ attachment to the Constitution, (consisting, to be sure, of King, Lords, and Commons) which one might grind out of any *resolution-mill*; which, in fact, has been so often repeated, that, if it stand by itself, it passes, like some of our oaths, for words of course, and which King James, so pleasantly found the *value* of, when he carried with him “the lives and fortunes of *all his Majesty’s loyal subjects of Great Britain*,”—on his *abdication-voyage*. The proposal was acceded to;—opposition from me, if not then indelicate, would have been ineffectual. My proposition on the Constitution appeared rejected, I might say scouted. The *reasons* offered by it for preferring this Constitution, appeared rejected *in toto*, without discussion, without any proposal to shorten, or to modify, or to change them, so as to meet more perfectly the sentiments of the Committee. Notwithstanding this discouragement, however, as I saw the defects of the proposition moved, I moved the first part of my proposition (the
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only part which there appeared a possibility of carrying) as an amendment, and, the remainder of the original proposition appearing afterwards either unnecessary or incompatible with the amendment, the latter was, after a good deal of debate, adopted, with the alterations which appear from a comparison of the first Convention resolution with that which I proposed. Against declaring that we were “from *education, habit and conviction*,” attached to the principles of the Constitution, I recollect no reason given; nor do I readily conceive any that could be given; unless one similar to Lord Hamlet’s, on the observation of “the fatirical slave—that old men had grey beards, &c.”—“All which, Sir,—though I most powerfully and potently *believe*, yet I hold it not *honesty* to have it so set down.” On perhaps a like principle, it was thought improper to declare a preference of our Constitution to a Democracy, “*pure or representative*.”—The word democracy, no doubt, includes all kinds of democracy; but I had thought there could be no harm in including, expressly, a *representative* one, when part of the country was suspected of a tendency to French principles, and when a visit to this kingdom from the French themselves, appeared not quite an improbability, if they received ever so little encouragement, and could command or steal a passage

passage to us. Gentlemen were cautious in another particular. They chose to declare attachment, not simply to the *principles*, but “ the *original principles*,” of the British Constitution ; as if its principles are not either the *same* they ever were, from the time when the Constitution can be said to have been really formed, or, if not the same, were not, in fact, *improved* or *meliorated*, by the executive power becoming more dependant on the legislature for revenue, “ by the gradual improvement of arts, and the correspondent progress of manners,”*
by

* “ The abuses of the executive power, which were so frequent in the early periods of the English Constitution, “ have since been removed by the gradual improvement of “ arts, and the correspondent progress of manners, without “ any considerable change in the distribution of the great “ powers of government. The *outlines* of the English Constitution are not very different, at this day, from what they “ were, in the reign of William the Conqueror ; but the powers which were then universally acknowledged, have been “ since more minutely applied to the detail of administration ; “ and the variations that have occurred in the modes of living, “ and in the condition of individuals, have been gradually accommodated to the spirit of the old institution. The *experience of the nation* has led them to fill up the picture, of “ which a *rude sketch* was delineated in that early period.”

I am happy to owe this authority, for the opinions I had entertained (without recollecting exactly whence I had got them)

by the consequent and naturally progressive power and wisdom of the British *democracy*, and by that happy, but perhaps somewhat accidental *union of interest* among the *whole people* of England, nobles, clergy and commons, which arose from the very defects, at least the occasional defects, of their Constitution, and from the occasional tyranny and folly of their Kings. The change, however, made by this amendment of my proposition, I considered at the time as only making the resolution a little less just. I am now unfortunate enough to consider it as a little foolish

them) to Mr. Millar, Professor of Law in the University of Glasgow, the truly Philosophical Historian of the English Government, (See his *Historical View*, book ii. chap. ii.) whose lectures I have had the pleasure of hearing; and I have only to regret, that my industry in pursuing, has so little corresponded with his ability in pointing out and illustrating, the grand outlines of general and national law. As to the idea itself, of there having existed an *original and ancient Constitution* in England, a *perfect model*, in principles and form, all deviations from which are to be considered as *corruptions*, and to which the actual Constitution must be *restored*, before the state can be sound, it seems too unphilosophic, and too absurd, to be seriously entertained by any man who can think, and uses his judgment. *Pallas* might have sprung, full-armed, from the head of *Jove*; but *perfect wisdom* never yet sprung, nor will it ever spring, though maturing to eternity, from the brain of *man*.

or so; and as, besides, tending to make the people believe that greater restorations, or changes, in our existing Constitution are necessary, than either the fact or political prudence is likely to warrant. But from the manner in which the amendment to my amendment was moved, we had a narrow escape of doing still worse, in approving (by implication, exclusively) the *original form*, as well as original *principles*, of the British Constitution; which might have furnished our political antiquarians with some excellent opportunities for display, in discovering *what* that form was,—*wherein* it differed from, and was preferable to, the *present*,—*when*, particularly, it *existed*, and *ceased* to exist, &c. &c. or it might have rendered our attachment to the present, and no doubt, degenerate form, and consequently our loyalty itself, (Heaven bless us!) problematical.

When this debate was ended, it would have entertained a man not too serious in the business, to have seen one or two honest good Gentlemen-Delegates look over at me, who had proposed and carried the principal amendment, and express to each other something like surprise, and even indignation, that we should have been “so long employed in doing *so little*!” It signified little (if I might presume to interpret the meaning of these honest

honest gentlemen) how we *expressed* ourselves, provided our meaning was understood ;—one set of words was as good, for that purpose, as another ;—and a word or two more or less, or the change of the place of a word or two, could be of no manner of consequence. A dissertation on *the use of language* would, to be sure, be a pleasant thing, in a political Convention ; and the decalogue might as well run, (as in the fine gentleman's bible) “ Thou *shalt* commit adultery,” as “ thou *shalt not*.” WE were sending forth our “ Tables of the Law,” and all the people were to say “ *Amen*,” and the legislature itself was to bow down before us, or before the divinity whom WE *declared* unto them ;—yet did some of ourselves (the chosen law-givers and prophets) think it a waste of time, that we should deliberate an hour or two on the *Constitution*, or on the words and manner in which we should praise or promulgate it !—O Phocion !—first, almost, among the heroes of Greece ! through life, in every extremity, her general, her counsellor, and her friend !—was it misanthropy, in *thee*, or was it contempt of the people, or was it pride, or what bad passion inspired thy satire, when, being applauded once in a public assembly, thy question was, to a friend—“ have I not let fall, I pray thee, *some piece of folly* ?”

But to return;—gentlemen, for some good reason or other, did not chuse to say all they might, either for the British Constitution, or our own. However, as certain “ infamous misrepresentations and ministerial lies” had gone abroad (I had told the Committee, I think, as much as that I feared there was a little truth in some of these same lies; or that the public, at least, had reason to think there was);—as it had been *said*, that there was something of a disposition to republican principles in many of our people in the North—they were resolved they would put malice completely out of countenance, and lest any critic should say our resolution in favour of the Constitution was a weak one, and did not sufficiently support our crazy old *Gothic Pile*, they built up against it a goodly broad-based *but-tress*, in shape of a *denunciation* of “ republican forms of government.” This truly they did—but was it against such forms *as bad in themselves*, or, as in themselves, *more defective* than our form of government?—“ Ah, no!”—Those forms are only disapproved, “ as *applied to this kingdom*.”—And when the circumstances of the kingdom *change* but a little, then every sensible politician must own, that the *present inexpediency* of applying such a form may change also—may become, indeed, *expediency*. “ Nothing human,” as was
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well observed by a gentleman of the Committee, " is unalterable. Therefore we cannot be, nor " should we declare ourselves, *unalterably attached* " to our Constitution." A French army, with the Tree of Liberty *might* alter our attachment ;—even the *delay* of a reform by Parliament *might* alter it ;—a thousand other circumstances, not yet conceived, *might* alter it ;—and, much as we are attached to our Constitution, we may soon, and consistently with, nay, under almost the authority of, this very resolution, think, and declare, the very reverse of what we now do. In the mean time, (or as the French say, *en attendant*) the shrewdness and wit of the Irish people (and wit and shrewdness our people have) is *trusted* with the implied inference of this resolution ;—that republican forms are no great grievance, *in themselves* ; and that we have no occasion to be *too* well content with the form and principles of the Constitution we have, or too unwilling, on any occasion, to risk the loss of it, by looking for, perhaps, a better one.—But it will be said, we obviated that inference in the first resolution. Perhaps we did ; if all people would consider both resolutions together ; which, by the bye, the Convention publication has separated ;—if we had done it so warmly, too, as that people in general would believe us perfectly sincere ; or,

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if we had given some such *reasons* for our opinion as might at once have been an evidence of our own sincerity, and an inducement and assistance to the people to *reconsider* the Constitution, and their situation under it. “ Oh, but all this is being too difficult!—Have we not cured all defects, and left not a loop-hole for doubt, by declaring our abhorrence of those principles which have a tendency to dissolve *all government*, and destroy *every* wise and salutary distinction in society?” Why, this is good; very good;—but it happens, rather unfortunately, that there is not a *sans-culotte*, nor an assassin, nor a worshiper, if there be any worshiper, at the *pantheon*—(the temple of *all the Gods and Demigods*) in Paris, nor is there a single devotee of the purest democracy, Mr. Paine himself not excepted, who would scruple to declare the same. If indeed, we had said *what* these principles are, which we conceive to have this horrible tendency, and *where they exist*;—if we had *described* them, so that innocent people, going about their own business, or having more zeal than knowledge in the business of the state, might know, and mark, and avoid them;—or if we had clearly separated the distinctions which, *in our opinion*, are “ wise and salutary” from those which we thought foolish and destructive, all had been well. We should,

at least, have been understood. But thundering, thus, an anathema against a *non-entity*, at least against principles of which many of us would deny the existence, and which, in fact, cannot exist generally in any nation, or under any form of government,—and declining, as some of our Committee did, to describe the principles we declared against, as “*levelling principles*,”—(a phrase which “they did not understand,” even after part of its general meaning had been explained, as including “the destruction of our established *ranks and orders*,”)—under all these circumstances, I venture to pronounce, that our resolution, in this part, has either no meaning, or a deceitful one. It pretends much, and does nothing. It speaks only to the ear, or it instills poison into the heart. It says nothing in favour of our own Constitution, nor any thing unfavourable to any possible Constitution which time, chance, or violence can ever establish in this nation.

I do not recollect any reason given in the Committee for taking no notice of our brethren of Great Britain, our *decided preference* of whom to all others, as a *confederated nation* (I think I may truly call them) I should, at this time most particularly, have wished to mark much more pointedly,
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had it not been for adding to the length of propositions already, I feared, too long. The rest of that proposition relating to the family and person of his Majesty, will, I think, on comparison with that of the Convention, explain and defend itself; even on principles the most popular, and on any view of facts which can be taken by discontent itself. Part of it was borrowed from recollection of some late resolutions of the city or county of Dublin. I have in this proposition, as published, marked certain words as emphatic, which I should have thought highly indecorous to do, in a publication perfectly general. But I consider these letters as not only addressed to *the people*, by way of defence of myself, against imputations of I know not what principles or spirit hostile to their wishes or demands, but as aiming also at impressing on their mind certain opinions, and the conviction of a truth, necessary perhaps to prevent their mistaking friends, and being misled by enemies, namely, that those who would support their king, may do it, not merely on the principles of personal, or what might be called vulgar loyalty, but on those of liberty also, and a zealous, and even a proud attachment to the laws.

On the 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th resolutions of the Convention I shall hereafter make some particular

ticular observations, for they seem to require it.—
 At present, I shall only say, that it appeared to
 me at once more suited to the object of this Con-
 vention, and more prudent and dignified, not to
 descend into any *detail*, either of grievances or
 remedies. Let us go ever so little into detail, on
 the question of reform, and it becomes necessary
 to ascertain facts, and to discuss principles; and
 the doing of either requires much time and great
 deliberation. But we were fully prepared to de-
 clare, and, from the very simplicity of the ob-
 jects, were likely to produce most effect by declar-
 ing, the *great, general and peculiar grievances* of
 this country, the source of all the inferior or par-
 ticular grievances. These great ones I had ac-
 cordingly reduced to three heads:—1st. The *ina-*
dequate state of representation; proving the ne-
 cessity of what is by some called *external reform*;—
 or of having the members freely and fairly elect-
 ed, by a sufficient number, and proper description
 of persons, of the people, chusing their members
 also for such a period of time as may tend to se-
 cure to the electors a sufficient controul over their
 conduct: 2dly. The *excessive influence* of the
 crown, or minister;—proving the necessity of
internal reform, as an additional means of keep-
 ing the House of Commons pure, when so elect-
 ed:—3dly. The Catholic Penal Laws; under
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which I meant to include all laws making any civil or political distinction between Catholic and Protestant subjects, on account of religion. The two first of these propositions I had drawn from the dictation and hints of the gentlemen I consulted; nor do I recollect that they made any objection to my mode of considering the Catholic Penal Laws, as a third great national grievance. I had indeed described them, and them only, as “an *intolerable* grievance:” as having produced, and now producing, worse consequences to the nation at large, than the other two united. But the present prospects of the Catholics, and of the nation, on that subject, and the little necessity there seemed to be, in this time of ferment, to declare any of our grievances intolerable, made me think it afterwards proper to omit this expression. The Convention passed no resolution on *internal* reform, or against the influence of the crown:—Whether this was an important omission or not, in persons aiming at a reform, “radical and complete,” let others determine.

But, odd as it may seem, there was not, as I recollect, a single resolution, going to the *entire emancipation* of the Catholics, proposed by any of the gentlemen who were for carrying matters with the highest hand; though my proposition

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on that subject might, at least, have given the hint; and though I had mentioned that the subject of the Catholics seemed to me to require, from its consequence, a separate resolution: and, finding the matter likely to be overlooked, I was obliged at last, near the close of the business in the Committee, to draw up hastily the resolution adopted, in the wording of which I received some assistance from Mr. Sinclair.

After declaring the grievances of the country, and the *indispensible necessity* of redress, and after guarding against any possible suspicion that our views were disloyal, or seditious, or tending to revolution, or to a separation from England, it appeared to me—(but in this, I confess, I followed my own ideas—not having an opportunity of fully consulting on it the parliamentary gentlemen whom I have mentioned) that a farther measure was necessary; viz. to declare our confidence in the power and resources of the people, *if they united, and acted with firmness and wisdom*;—to declare our conviction, that they had it in their *power* to obtain redress of their grievances, by means constitutional and legal, peaceable and safe;—to declare what these means are, and, by this declaration, to do two things, each, it seemed, of the very last importance, in the present state and temper of the times;—to incline government to reason-

able and handsome *concession*, and to impress on the people this sentiment, that *peace* is equally their interest and their duty. These constitutional and peaceable means being enumerated in my ninth proposition, I proposed in the tenth (with the concurrence, or by advice of the gentlemen I had consulted) a petition to Parliament; which, in fact, is one of those constitutional and peaceable means mentioned in the preceding proposition, and is of these means the first, the most ordinary, and, if I may say so, the least costly; and, in the eleventh, or last proposition, that the Convention should be adjourned to *a day certain*; when the effect of the petition to Parliament, and of all our other measures;—when, in short, the entire state of public affairs, would be farther known; and the wisdom and spirit of the Convention might be exercised accordingly.

As to this idea of the peaceable means of redress, it is one learned and practised, by many of us, in the school,—I will call it, the glorious school, of *eighty-two*—Mr. Grattan himself, I may say, our master. One bloodless revolution, or restoration, rather, of the Constitution, inclines a man who watched its progress, and enjoyed its consummation, to believe, perhaps too easily, in another. This belief is of a nature so flattering

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ing to the most ordinary philanthropy, that it cannot be resigned unless to the extorted conviction of experience; and I, for one, will cling to it while I can, though it should be said, and sung, of *us peaceable reformers*, that the years since *eighty-two* have taken more from our spirit, than they have added to our wisdom.

The idea is perhaps not sufficiently understood by some, or recollected by others: I would beg to recommend it to the serious consideration of those gentlemen, who, if they conceive any *middle line*, or any thing before them but the *alternative*, which I call a desperate one, of immediate and complete concession, on the part of government, or war, on the part of the people,—have not yet favoured us with a clear explanation of their sentiments.

The strongest of these proposed measures (*non-consumption, non-importation* agreements,—what I may call agreements of *interdict*, &c.) seems to amount to this; that, so far as the agreements extend, the people do by themselves, what they sometimes wish their representatives to do for them: *They refuse supplies, till grievances are redressed*; nay, they put it out of the power of their representatives, without their actual individual consent,

consent, to grant these supplies. The measure commences, in fact, against the minister, *a commercial and political war*; whilst it deprives him of many of the means or resources of war, either offensive or defensive. It is a blockade of the revenue, and cuts off the reservoir of its citadel,—or some of its main pipes and fountains—*consumption*.—It starves the troops of the castle. These have seldom the spirit of Londonderry of old. They fight neither for laws nor for religion;—and, rather than live upon rats, they will desert or capitulate. It supplies the army of the people, not merely from those able to bear arms: Every man, and every woman, and every infant, that eats, drinks, and is clothed, beyond the *absolute necessities* of nature, and makes but a trifling change of habits in these articles, subtracts, from that instant, from the collections, from the daily sustenance, of the minister, and becomes, from that instant, the truly unbought soldier of the people. This subtraction from the supplies of the minister, is in exact proportion to the former luxury, vanity, and folly, and to the present self-denial and resolute determination of the non-consumer or associator. Nay, the associator may do more than fight himself; he may enlist, and press others into the service, or may at least render them neutral, if he cannot detach them from the political

tical enemy.—He may cease to employ, to encourage, or to hold certain intercourse with, those who persist in supporting the opposite line of political conduct. If all this would not have the effect of *coercion*, I cannot conceive what would. If it would not be *legal coercion*—if law *could* make it otherwise, “without ceasing to be law,” or without soliciting a revolution,—I have hitherto been totally astray as to the principles of either law or the constitution, and as to all ideas of what a people used to liberty, and possessed of sense and spirit, would bear. Ideas of temporary necessity or expediency may induce the legislature to say, that none but certain descriptions of the people shall be armed; or that the arms they use shall be of a certain kind, and used only on certain occasions, or for certain purposes; but no legislature could presume to say to the people,—“Ye shall *use*, whether ye will or not, our *luxuries*, or we shall tax, as we please, your *necessaries*. Ye shall support, though ye detest us.”—Such language will not be held, nor the conduct that would speak such language. The world is taught more wisdom.—The only question, then, that remains, is this;—will the people perceive the *full power* of such measures, and adopt, and persevere in them, in the face of present and immediate difficulties, losses, deceptions, temptations,

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ons, and threats, perhaps, of power? That they will do so, I am unable to answer; but I will not scruple to say;—that, if the people have not the common sense to see, and the heart to feel, the strength of such peaceable means of coercion, and the far inferior risk and expence of them, on every principle of calculation, mercantile, political and humane;—and if they have not that contempt of inferior and temporary gains and sacrifices, that love of honour, of their country, and of man, and that calm and deliberate and persevering fortitude, which *may* be necessary to the adoption and success of such a *civil association*;—the man who, thinking so of them, would advise such a people to attempt, or would join them in attempting, an improvement of their Constitution, *by a civil war*, can be little better than a desperate quack, an incorrigible fool, or a ready-handed ruffian. His object must be to rear some altar to his prurient vanity, some throne for his “ vaulting ambition,” or to glut his necessities or avarice with plunder, or his intolerance, or revenge, with persecution: or, should he be none of *these*, he must be some ignorant and unhappy projector, incapable of weighing facts, or foreseeing consequences;—incapable of perceiving *what sort of a people* he would trust to, and inflame, and let loose, to what tyrant passions

fions, and tyrant leaders, he would give them over,—to what “dissolution of all the elements of safety,” to what chances of a universal crash and wreck of happiness, he would expose them,——confounding, at length, the wisdom, and hopes, and fortitude of man, and rendering despotism itself, perhaps, the miserable refuge of despair.

Strongly impressed with these sentiments, from some little experience in the late revolution of our country, and from the *absolute necessity* which I thought I had for some time seen, of at once opposing a *firm mound*, and opening a *safe channel*, to popular enthusiasm,—it may be conceived that I could not, with perfect coolness, see not my own sentiments only, but those I had reason to think, of some gentlemen in the Committee every way respectable (on this occasion, however, I thought, too acquiescent, or fearful of contention)—either little attended to, or indignantly overpowered. I could not coolly see a system of popular safety and strength, as I thought it, overborne by what appeared to me one of impotent, yet dangerous violence. I saw the constitution, I thought, not sufficiently defended;—the too well-founded suspicions of the political principles and motives of some of our reformers, no-

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ticed, indeed, but left unrefuted ;—attachment to our sovereign, founded on facts very lately occurring, and therefore partial, and, constructively, derogatory ;—grievances insisted on in details, then unnecessary, and tending to irritate still farther, if not from haste and inaccuracy, to mislead the public mind. I saw a proposed declaration of not only the possibility, but the means, of a peaceable redress of those grievances, silently, but intelligibly enough, rejected. —I saw a petition to Parliament,—the first in order of those peaceable means,—one too, which appeared natural, if not indispensable, so long as Parliament, which alone had the power of giving legal and peaceable redress, should permit the people to indulge the hope of it, or until it should please the people to declare, that they would no longer hope, or counterfeit hope, but would dismiss those superannuated authorities from their service,—this measure, too, I saw rejected, by the express disapprobation of some leading individuals, by the obvious disinclination of the Committee as a body, and by their adoption of resolutions differing much in spirit and complexion.—I saw that, in the same breath with which we were to call on the Volunteers again to array themselves, “ and to encrease their numbers, and improve their discipline,” we

were to declare our disapprobation of any addition to the forces of the kingdom,—regular,* I think, as well as in form of a militia,—and this at a time when we were engaged, (no matter how or wherefore) in an uncommon and perhaps dangerous war.—I saw that, while it was thus, in a manner, declared to be our object to make the people (in other words, *the warm and active part of them*) as strong as possible, and to keep the government of the country, as much as possible in a state of weakness; and while, on the one hand, we declined any declaration of attachment to our friends, or “confederated brethren,” in England, and were, on the other, to declare our disapprobation of a war *already commenced, and now* (by any efforts of our’s, at least) *inevitable*, against those, whom not a few of us had been in the habit of considering as our brethren of France, as fighting the battles of *man* against *despotism*,—and now therefore, no doubt (did we but confide in them) our ready and trusty *protectors*;—while we were acting *thus*, we were to announce A CONVENTION OF THE PEOPLE, to speak probably the warm and now

* That part against the addition to the standing army, if my recollection do not fail me as to there being any such, was, it seems, given up.

enthusiastic, and, of course, unweighed and indigested opinions of the people, and to be supported by the people's *irresistible army*.—Seeing all these measures thus in train for execution, and viewing them (so far as time and hurry allowed me to view any thing distinctly) as likely to appear under the colours and character which I have described, I trust it will be granted, by any man of political comprehension and political heart,—that it is, at least, *possible*, that any little spirit of petty authorship, any paternal, or maternal tenderness for a *period* produced with labour, or for a *sound*, the last child of fancy (which writers, little as well as great, are accused of) *might*, in me, a mere ordinary man, without dying-away in sensibility, or being yet ripe for “the kiss of fraternity,”—have been lost, and swallowed up, in an apprehensive anxiety, if not sorrow, for *the probable degradation of the POPULAR CHARACTER, and the possible destruction of POPULAR HAPPINESS.*

This anxiety I did feel, unmixed, if I know myself, with a baser sentiment; nor was it likely to be removed by the information we received of certain popular arts, practised, probably, with the best intentions, but not likely to be thence less pernicious in their effect. A proposition,
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of a gentleman said to have, from his character, some political lead in the country, declaring that "*God and Nature*, as well as the *Constitution*," entitled the people of Ireland to be fully represented in Parliament, &c. had been rejected by the Committee, or got rid of as by a previous question. The proposer, it was said, carried his resolution immediately into the *market-place*, and shewed the Delegates, with much indignation, the (no doubt, undeniable and necessary) proposition "which *their Committee* had rejected!" Whether we thence passed with these Delegates for perfect *atheists, monsters and traitors*, wantonly insulting God, Nature, and our Country, I know not; but probably this communication was not lost upon the hearers and their brethren.—If the rejection of *such* a proposition was spread abroad as a proof of disaffection in the Committee, what would not have been said of men who declined receiving, from a Belfast Delegate, a declaration that "taxation and representation are *inseparable*, &c.?" To several it appeared, I believe, at least unnecessary, and, to me, it seemed also capable of a false and dangerous application; nor did "the opinion of the whole nation of America," much as I respect them, and even their resistance to the British claims, appear to me decisive as to the constitutional

tutional truth of the *principle*. The proposition, however, was withdrawn.

But "the multitudinous tongue" was not, alone, to have the honour of teaching delegates their duty, or of warning the honest among them of the designs of the disaffected *. French *Pla-cards*, in good plain English however, appeared on the second morning, before the meeting of the Convention, conspicuously stuck up on the cor-

* I have since the meeting, heard of some little political anecdotes, equally false and improbable, having been circulated of myself, among the Delegates, at the very moment that my conduct in the committee was still farther, if possible, confuting them, and when I should as soon have suspected an accusation against me for coining, or witchcraft. The time, place, and manner of distributing these calumnies, sufficiently shew their origin and object.—I only allude to them, as some evidence of *a certain system of government*, which some, I believe, would have no objection to establish over the minds, meaning no doubt the *understandings*, of the people. It would be only a gentle kind of *modest direction* of their opinions, prejudices, and passions, as to whom they should trust, and how far, and how they should, on *all necessary occasions*,—for the public good,—set him, and his opinions aside, by scouting, blasting, branding, &c. &c. a kind of *demago-cracy*, which must be a great improvement on any of "the *simple* forms of government," even on a *representative democracy* itself, of which it seems to be either the *acmé* or *euthanasia*.

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ners of streets, &c. “ DELEGATES!!! (said “ they) BEWARE EQUALLY of the arts of THE “ ARISTOCRACY, and the filky soothing measures of YOUR COMMITTEE!”—How far *the committee* deserved the *hard* epithets given to their labours (sufficiently intelligible, no doubt, to mechanical as well as political Delegates) the labours of the committee themselves, adopted with so few changes by the Convention, will best prove. But this suspected, and therefore dangerous *Aristocracy*, was generally understood to describe certain Delegates from the county of Down—the greater or most leading part of whom, at least, were members of the Northern Whig Club, were, as such, declared friends of reform, and had by their uniform conduct, as freeholders and as volunteers, shewn themselves attached, not only to what is popularly considered the independence of their own county, but to that of the kingdom at large, I might add, I believe, to the liberty of mankind.—This being, then the general description of our *Down Dunganon Aristocracy* (and gentlemen are at liberty to add as many others as they can find, from other counties, to whom the odious appellation of *aristocracy* could be applied) I might leave it with any man of the dullest understanding to say, what is the conclusion naturally to be drawn respecting

specting the *political principles* of those dealers in placards and issuers of proclamations—*de par le peuple*; and respecting *their opinion* of the property, the rank, the political erudition and tenets, the penetration and good sense, of the *majority* of their own assembly;—~~when~~, in order to carry *their* measures, these gentlemen, anonymously, and by a species of publication to which the occasion permitted no answer, either on the one hand, defamed a set of gentlemen, whom they knew not, or knowing, ought to have trusted, or, on the other, declared it a *general disqualification* for an honest reformer, and a *lawful signal* for popular suspicion and distrust, that a Delegate of the People should be—a *gentleman*, or should possess that *rank* and *property*, which give him a great and permanent interest in his country.

From the public political distrust of gentlemen, and of men of property,—as such,—to the destruction of *all ranks* and *all property*, and, with them, *all liberty and security*, the progress, in a revolution, is as necessary as the accelerated motion of a falling body; and the *reform* that should *begin* on such principles, must *end*, not merely in a revolution, but in anarchy. The humble, perhaps innocent *Essays* at Dungannon, would, in the hands of some of our faithful copyists

pyists and enterprising imitators of unhappy France, as surely "serve to the history" of *a French Revolution in Ireland*, as the imprisonment of the unfortunate Lewis must appear now, to all of us, to have led to his murder, or the government of the mob of Paris—to the tyranny of plunderers and assassins.

L E T T E R III.

THE more I thought of the measures to be proposed to the Convention, the less I liked them. An appeal from the Committee to the Convention itself might not be, exactly, one “*from Philip inflamed to Philip sober* ;” but it seemed necessary.—If it should not succeed, it would be a sort of record, that other measures had been, at least, proposed, and it would be an ultimate appeal to the constituent body, or to the people at large. Disagreeable as it must ever be to propose what, almost certainly, will be disapproved,—and doubly disagreeable, as the moving of any thing unpopular must be to one, who, like me, had ever leaned to the democratic side, which was his own,—who had ever, in all companies, at least, that verged to the aristocratic, *confessed himself a democrat*, and who sincerely wished that *all popular meetings* should, for the sake of the people itself, be *respectable*,—I thought this service had become a duty.—If it succeeded, it would do good ; if it failed, it operated as a protest. I resolved, therefore, to
propose

propose to the Convention the adoption of such *leading propositions* of mine as marked out a *different system of popular opinions and conduct* from that preferred by the Committee; and was, of course, to move;—that they should add, by way of amendment, to their first resolution, the *reasons* for preferring the British Constitution, contained in my first proposition; and also, that they should adopt my ninth proposition, on the peaceable means of a redress of grievances, and the following one, on a petition to Parliament.

In this determination I was only the more confirmed, by the accounts which, early in the second morning, we received of the patriotic *manœuvres* and *manifestoes* mentioned in my last letter; some of which might equally affect the passions of the Delegates who were to *exhibit*, if I may say so, and of their audience in the galleries, who had shewn, by a little applause once, conferred on some warm or bold expressions, that they were not *most* delighted with aristocratic lullabies. The spirit which I saw, instead of exciting, repressed my own. If this prove me a political coward, I cannot help it. I began now to doubt, whether a declaration in my ninth proposition, which, in writing (and part of it I had written just before the meeting of the Committee on business) had appeared perfectly innocent, might not, in its consequences,

be inflammatory; that, I mean, which supposes, *in some sort*, the possibility of “a war of the minister, or of a cabal, against the people,” &c. and, in terms perhaps too strong or highflown, gives an opinion on the certain failure of such a war, if such a war were possible.

Doubting *now*, and merely doubting, the tendency of this part of the proposition; and thinking this possible tendency to inflame, not necessary;—and conceiving the declaration itself as a part of the whole proposition, not essential;—I resolved to omit it in my proposed motion.

Here again must I confess a political sin. I left the Committee, for a time, to pursue their labours, and paid my addresses to the aristocracy. —I explained to my Brother-Delegates of the county of Down, my opinions, and the reasons on which they were founded, and read them the amendment and propositions which I intended, with their approbation, to move. I told them at the same time, that I should probably be obliged, in giving reasons for these propositions, to bear a little hard on the conduct of some public bodies, particularly of the late Belfast town meeting; and perhaps, of consequence (I added, laughingly) to take some *liberties* with an acquaintance of mine
then

then present, the chairman of that meeting.—I had every reason, unless the politeness of these gentlemen deceived me, to think that their opinions and mine were literally the same. They said they would support what I proposed—some, that they would protest, though single, if violent measures were adopted; a resolution which I also declared. I told them that *their* stake in the country was much greater than mine; but I had some stake in it, which I did not wish to risk, and that, at all events, I thought this conduct my duty. I would not, however, press them to resolve on any thing hastily.—I left the propositions, I think, for them to consider and consult on. They would tell me the result.—This result was, that, after some time, one of these gentlemen informed me, that, on second thoughts, they did not wish to make this *attack* on the town of Belfast, and that they, therefore, wished to give up the idea of moving the propositions, though their opinion on them was the same as before,—and though they wished them, if it were possible, adopted.—I could not say I disapproved of the delicacy of these gentlemen towards their neighbours of Belfast.—To press the matter, might, in me, have seemed to proceed from some resentment at my own propositions being overlooked, some vanity in appearing as a sort of leader,

leader, or in *exhibiting* as any thing like an orator ;—while, in respect to the latter sort of exhibition, I have, from feelings partly instinctive and almost boyish, not overcome by personal habits, and rather increased by the ridiculous displays I have been witness to, conceived a dislike bordering on contempt and disgust.—I could, to say the truth, have the less stomach for any such attempt, as I knew my talents, such as they are, to be not of the popular kind, and believed my opinions, on this occasion, so little likely to please the million, that the service seemed to be a forlorn hope and a fruitless martyrdom. I easily yielded to the determination of my Brother Delegates, thinking it natural, if not praise-worthy in *them*, though I was myself by no means convinced of its intrinsic propriety. I resolved to leave the oratorial field in the Convention to persons more inclined, and better qualified, to beat it, and to appear no farther in that of politics, than absolute necessity might seem to require.—The defects of the propositions, if they were defects, seeming systematic and incurable, all opposition to them must have been fruitless ;—and that such opposition was not more likely to succeed by coming *from me*, I had afterwards, I thought, a remarkable instance in the *difficulty* which one of the secretaries, and several others, seemed

seemed to find in conceiving the meaning, or propriety, of a very simple amendment which I moved, to a clause in the seventh resolution, by inserting the word *equal* before the words “*extension* of elective franchise to persons of every religious persuasion;”—for these were the words adopted by the Convention.—This has since been called “a *verbal* amendment,” in a Derry publication, mentioning it as *mine*, but not saying *what* the amendment was, nor, it is evident, intending to insinuate any thing in my favour.—How such an amendment could be, for a moment, misunderstood, seems inconceivable; and no person could object to the *principle* of it, who agreed to the resolution for “the immediate and entire emancipation” of the Catholics. I mention this circumstance, as indicating *a certain kind of spirit* in some individuals; not from any wish to flatter the Catholics, *in their hour of success*;—a conduct of which some of their leading men here know me, I believe, to be incapable.

When the resolution as to a *Militia* was read, I was so struck with the wording of it, that I believe it must have passed in the committee while I happened to be absent.—As proposed, it expressed “*concern* and *astonishment*” at the intention of embodying a militia being entertained.—I did not
till

till after the meeting, recollect that the county from part of which I was a Delegate, had publicly disapproved of this measure ;—and, if I had, it is probable I should, *for myself*, have expressed the same sentiments I did.—I declared I was “ not at all astonished ” at the idea ;—that it seemed *not unnatural* that government should think of adding to the military force of the kingdom when we were actually engaged in a dangerous and extraordinary kind of war, one in which our enemies professed, indeed, not to wage *war* but to *bring liberty* ;—that, if any such addition to our forces were necessary, a militia was certainly the safest and most constitutional ; that *I was not prepared to say* that *the Volunteers* were, under these circumstances, a *sufficient defence* to the country ; or that the measure “ could *only* have *ministerial patronage* ” for its object ;—that I could conceive it to have *other*, and very proper, and perhaps necessary objects, besides *patronage* ;—that I therefore begged I might not be held *concluded* by the proposition, as it stood. I was instantly taken up by a Delegate from Derry, as having insinuated something against the volunteers.—I simply *denied the charge* ; and the gentleman was happy I had *explained*, when he should rather have been happy to find he *misunderstood* me. Upon this, however, we had some handsome eulogiums pronounced on
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the volunteers ; of whom a Belfast paper, very handsomely, tho' I believe not truly, says I spoke " with respect." I spoke *with respect* of the volunteers !—just as much, I believe, as I did of Tippoo Saib. I no more dreamt, I think, of doing so, (tho' not quite for the same reason) than I suppose a good cordial lover would of entertaining his mistress with his *profound respect* for her, in a *tête-a-tête*. The gentlemen do me quite too much honour. Yet, after all I heard in praise of my old friends the volunteers, and after all the weighty reasons that were given to prove that this country is now *better secured or defended*, by them, than in Eighty-two, when they were much more numerous, beyond comparison better disciplined, and extended universally over the kingdom, (supposing the question rested singly on this ground) after all these arguments, did I remain an obstinate sceptic, and a non-juring patriot. The present war appeared to me unlike every other, and the provisions for it should be as different. Dumourier might offer us his *protection*, as he had done to *Belgium*, and land with *the tree of liberty*. He was the more likely to do so, as we professed ourselves considerably discontented. The force ready to oppose such protection, if offered, and if the war continued, it was not improbable it would be offered, should be not a small

one.—All these sentiments seem to me perfectly consistent with my real good opinion of even the *present* volunteers as a *body*, and with warm recollection of the truly constitutional enthusiasm which glowed in our volunteers of *Eighty-two*. I was not called on, nor did I think it necessary, to express any opinion, or any doubts I might have entertained of *some particular corps*, or of *some individuals* at least, of the present body :—I hope it is not *Leze-nation* to have some such doubts, for if it be, I freely say, that I am *now* a confirmed traitor—and yet all that I said at Dunganannon was guiltless of an intended insinuation of this kind ; and I had then less of the guilt of *thinking* so than, from subsequent reflection, I have at this day.

The militia-resolution expressed at first but “ concern and astonishment ” at the intention of embodying them. To get rid of the surprising word *astonishment*, it was moved that *indignation* should be substituted, which, without being so intended, I believe, made the denunciation more deadly. But a Delegate, whom I had expected to be among the moderate men, moved for expunging *our concern* at the project of government ; —“ he felt *no concern* upon the occasion,” he said ; the meaning of which words I find myself even
now

now at a loss to understand ; unless it was the unseemly and almost inconceivable one that struck me at the first hearing,—that *the more absurdly* Government and Parliament acted, it was so much the better ;—the sooner would *their* Iron despotism end, and the sooner would the Saturnian reign of *the people* commence.—What else could be the principle of *unconcern* at foolish measures of a Parliament, then in the very act of concession to the people, and which, according to our own declaration, had “ *pledged itself* ” to farther concession ? Yet this was the language of coolness itself ; and is only to be taken as an instance of that popular, but sometimes dangerous temptation, *bravade* !

One word more as to the Volunteers. I went to Dungannon determined not to *propose* the measure of calling on them to array,—which, after what had passed and been published on the subject, might be considered as a summons to them to assist us in reforming our Legislature ;—and I was equally determined *not to oppose* the motion, if made by another ; for, whatever might be the *real impolicy* of this proposal, as tending to create suspicion, or spread alarm, on the popular *motives* and *intended means* of reform, the people would be apt to consider any man as an enemy to re-

form, who should oppose even a *declaration that they should arm*; a thing widely different from their *being* armed, and still more different from any attempt to *disarm Government*.

How little reason there was to fear that the Volunteers would be overlooked, by the *bolder* reformers, appeared evident, not only from our resolutions thus summoning them and denouncing a Militia, but from an amendment actually moved to the resolution of thanks to the Volunteers, the *purport* of which was, not that ordinary and “milky” one mentioned in the News-letter of our Delegate and Historiographer Mr. Joy,—“respecting the betraying of trust, the abuse of delegated authority, and bartering the privileges of constituents for disgraceful rewards;”—but a good round and plump declaration of our expectation or hopes, that, if *Parliament* did not *itself reform itself* (and, I suppose, by a short day) “the *irresistible force* of the *constituent body*” would make its appearance *in propria persona*,—take the business into its own hands, and settle it, no doubt, in its own manner. The private integrity of the Gentleman who moved this amendment is, I believe, as unquestioned as are, I understand, his skill in his own profession, and his zeal in going through with whatever he cordially undertakes. It is not to be supposed, however, that he could, *in reality*,

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have

have been more *serious* in the intention which appeared on *the face* of this proposal, than some of us thought it necessary to be in the manner of receiving it. He could only have wished, as we all do, that Government should perceive, there was a *spirit* in the people, which it would be more prudent and proper to concede to than to trifle with. However, as the proposal was, in its whole extent, *apparently* serious, and might by many, not of the hearers only, but of those who would circulate the business, be considered as really such; and as the personal character of the mover might have too much political weight with the people in his own neighbourhood, it seems necessary to remark; that it is this very language and mode of proceeding, in some friends of the people, and in some perhaps who are incapable of being friends to any but themselves, which has gone a great way to *ruin* the popular cause,—to alienate or alarm real and warm friends of reform, and to furnish Government with not an excuse merely, but (I will say it) a justification for measures of strength, offensive as well as defensive.—I remark on this mode of proceeding the more freely, and from greater conviction of the necessity, as the praises given in the principal papers of the province, to the ardency of this Gentleman's zeal, to his candour, and his understanding

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(meaning, I suppose, his *political* understanding) shewn in parts of the debate, might tend to propagate, and give force to certain opinions and maxims, which a very popular Delegate chose to applaud so highly as to say,—“he approved of *every thing* that Gentleman had said that day, (or at that meeting)—*only* he did not, perhaps, think it proper to use *such strong expressions*.” If the spirit of the proposals made that day by the Gentleman thus publickly applauded, by Delegates who ought not, even in appearance, to mislead the people, were *followed up*,—the *effect* (I am far from saying, the *intended effect*) would be, a civil war in the country, before many months. The question would then no longer be,—reform, but political salvation; no longer, perhaps, civil or political liberty, but personal existence, and that of property, reputation, honour, and the *power* of acting according to a man’s conscience, when all that he held dear, all that bound him to earth or to mankind, depended on the passions of mobs, or the principles of demagogues.

When we had drawn out our Volunteers, and dispatched the Militia, we came, not indeed to put an *end* to the French war, but to resolve that *we wished* it had never begun. How this measure passed in the Committee, I have not the least recollection,

collection, and therefore conclude I must, at the moment, have been absent. By several of us, it was objected to, as not connected with reform, nor, of course, within our commission, or the objects of the meeting; by others, and particularly by me, on this ground also, that, besides going out of our way without doing good, either to France or ourselves, (for now, we could not prevent the war, which was commenced, and which *England* would support) we might, do some harm, by giving occasion for the suspicions so often mentioned, that our principles and inclinations were French, and that we should have little objection to their assistance in our projected reform. There seemed the more reason to think this suspicion possible, as we shewed, by our declaration against a Militia, that we wished Government not to be much *in force*, even of the constitutional kind. Our measures singly, might be innocent; taken together, they might appear otherwise. If to say *any thing* on the subject were necessary, we must do the best we could, and at all hazards. Here we volunteered for difficulties.

Most, if not all who spoke, expressed their strong dislike of the war itself. I did so too, in expressions of which I now am literally ashamed. For, though I detested from my soul, when it was first formed, the combination of Despots (I called them)

them) against France;—considering it as a conspiracy against liberty itself, in one against the *real* and *free* will of a generous and high-spirited people, who had chosen their Government, and would keep to it, and exercise it in justice, mildness, mercy, and gratitude to their benefactors,—among the first of whom was their King;—though I had been one of those who rejoiced in the Austrian and Prussian discomfiture;—though I had *supposed* the unhappy Lewis but too justly *dethroned*, and that he must have been somewhat more than man, if he had not *wished* the constitution destroyed, and if, so wishing, he had, by neither act nor omission, from neither inclination nor weakness, betrayed it;—yet having seen a *mock-trial* prove the impossibility of a *fair conviction*; having had but one opinion, and having yielded, I thank my God, to but one feeling, as to the last *nameless* outrage, not merely on a fallen King, but on every thing that interests us in justice, honour, and humanity;—having opened my eyes, at length, to something more than a suspicion, that, where such foul acts, or even an acquiescence in them, are the only means to gain, or to preserve power, or are the necessary conditions of tenure on which property and life itself are held;—I am *compelled* to own, that there must be, in the very principles of the state, if not wide and deep

deep over the nation itself, *something* so desperately rotten, that the means of cure may not be within the immediate comprehension of every little reasoner and little wit among us; that the lover of liberty *may* be obliged, for a while, to bid his soul suspend her functions, or to mark only the unfolding of things, and in the mean time, to believe it *possible*, that if Kings and Ministers, it must be granted, act only from the motives of *men*,—yet, on this occasion, they *may* be men, or may have the merit at least, of “plagues or earthquakes,” in sweeping away the stench of carnage and putridity, and rendering the earth a habitation fit for man.

In the progress of the human mind, there are *truths*, clear perhaps, when once admitted, and but the natural or necessary consequences of other truths already admitted, which yet the heart of man must be allowed to receive with hesitation and distrust. That a war of kings and nobles, to destroy a popular government, no matter of what kind, or how it may have conducted itself, how it may have tyrannised over its enemies, or gasconaded and threatened, in respect to those who could not be its friends,—that such a war *can* be one not to be execrated in every stage and circumstance;—or that the *motives* of our minister

in joining such a confederacy, and declining negotiation, *could* deserve even a suspended reprobation, is perhaps one among the truths I have mentioned. At Dungannon, certainly, I forgot the commenced train of my own reasonings, and went, vulgarly perhaps, with the popular torrent of indiscriminate censure of the war, tho' I thought it my duty not to give the opinion as a Delegate. The manœuvre of reserving the question on the French war till the business of the Convention was over, and the chairman had left the chair,—that so we,—known to be the same body of men, only under a different name, and with a different chairman, should do that which we doubted the *propriety* of our doing in our own name, and under our own character;—that we should say—“ Now, Gentlemen, take notice,—we are “ not *Gentlemen* but *Delegates* ”—and now, again,—“ we are not *Delegates*—we are only *Gentlemen* ! ”—this dignified *Hocus Pocus* was thought a most happy compromise of opinions, and all that remained to give full effect to the political juggle, was,—that “ honourable mention ” should *not* be made of it in the proceedings of the day,—that the Delegates should invite *the Galleries and Streets* to the “ honours of the sitting,”—and that the Printer should get a sly hint, to put the *advertisement* into a different corner of the paper. To this manœuvre,

however,

however, I, for one, did not chuse to lend myself, or “ to do *indirectly* what I had declared against doing in a direct manner ;” and a few of us chose to retire from the meeting, that it might, so far at least, be different a meeting, and that we might play no part in the “ *Dance by the characters,*”—or the *After-piece*.

If there are points in which I am not much indebted to the favour of the Committee, there is one, at least, in which I acknowledge myself their debtor, and in which the nation too owes them a species of gratitude. They adopted of two measures, the weaker, or the less violent. They preferred appointing a Committee to call, if necessary, a National Convention, rather than themselves, hold, as I proposed,—a sort of *permanent sitting*, by adjournment to a *day certain*. We could have done little more if the country were declared “ in danger.” By this measure, the Delegates have saved themselves (and me as one, I thank them) some trouble, and the nation, I trust, will not suffer much by the change.

On the proposal being made for calling shortly a *National Convention*, a Delegate from Belfast, who has been among the most strenuous supporters of the warm measures of that town, opposed the proposition, and preferred leaving the power with the Committee, giving some rea-

sons for the *present delay* of this call, which, I think, ought not to pass unremarked. They seemed to contain more than met the ear, and what did meet the ear was not without sufficient meaning. After observing that he had been instructed, and had intended to vote for the call of a National Assembly on a fixed day, he mentioned, as I recollect (and I think I cannot forget the purport of what he said, or it's *impression* on me) that, *since he had come to the Convention, he had received information*, which had changed his opinion. That in the *present* situation of the Catholics of this kingdom (the bill for their relief then depending, I suppose he meant) it would be highly imprudent in them to come forward; but that *he had good reason to be assured*, that, as soon as they could with safety, they would join the Protestants warmly in pursuit of a reform; even though gratified with all they had asked from Government; “FOR EVEN THEN, *they would only be our BROTHER-SLAVES.*” It was our part to await *their time*, and, when that last measure of the people, a National Convention, should be resorted to, *he would risk his whole fortune in carrying the will of this Convention into effect.*

Such appeared to be the sentiments of a Delegate in whom I should wish to excuse much of what might be called exceptionable,
—entertaining

—entertaining for him, as a man and even kinsman, a personal regard, and having thought that, in many fundamental points, we coincided in political opinion. But the political popularity of this gentleman in his town and neighbourhood, his known connection with certain warm societies, and with some Catholic leaders, during their late revolution, and the confidence which his zeal, and I believe, some real good services have inspired, together with the influence which he may have from some considerable commercial property, have made me think that *such* sentiments and hints, delivered by him, on such a public occasion, are a call on me for some critical reproof.

A public declaration, that a man of some property and influence would *risk* his whole fortune, (if he did not say his life itself) in support of *WHATEVER* should be determined respecting a reform of our Constitution, by a *future* popular or National Convention, is, in itself, one should think, to all men of common-sense, a subject of alarm. The consequences of such *anticipated pledges to uncertain, future alterations*, must convey to the public a clear opinion,—and such clear opinions have already been given by others,—that *no* alteration of our Constitution *can* be for the worse; or, that no National Convention

“ *can*

“ *can do wrong* ;” —either opinion, no doubt, most *constitutional*, most comfortable, and most safe! —But, to ascertain, that one of these opinions is actually held, we are scarce left to criticism or construction. —We are, at this very Convention, and by this very gentleman, informed, in so many words, of what *Wisdom herself* had before told us, from the streets of Belfast, —when too many *did* listen to her, —that we (as a nation, no doubt, and as individuals) are *neither more nor less* than SLAVES. If it be so —’tis grievous! —pitiful! —and *no alteration*, in truth, *can* be for the worse; and the *sooner*, and the *more* we alter, I suppose it will be the better! —Oh, but —“ we must wait for the Catholics.” —True; —I had forgot the Catholics. —Now, that they are a part of us, we shall be forgetting them more and more, poor people, every day! —But if, as I *understood* the fact to be, and as those who heard it, must I think, have understood it, *the Catholics*, or any leading individuals among them, or any supposed friends of theirs, on their behalf, —*have informed* or *assured* this their zealous and known friend and confidant — that *they*, in due season, and when safely, in respect to their bill, they may, would join, in their strongest measures, *such* reformers, —men who tell them, that they *now*, after all they have got, and that we ourselves, in all time past, have

have been, and now are—*perfect and absolute slaves*, &c. &c.—if this be the fact, (and if not, I trust it will be contradicted by the parties most interested)—our reformers and our reform are in a hopeful condition, indeed ;—and a blessed reform it will be,—when it makes its appearance,—pure and perfect from the hands of our Omnipotence !

When the business of the Convention was just at a close, it occurred to me that there yet remained one feeble attempt to be made, to save the character of some individuals, if nothing, in that particular, could be done for the Convention itself.—I therefore, with permission of those nearest me of the Delegates of the county of Down, (they all before indeed had approved the principal idea) mentioned to the Chairman ; that it had been my wish, and that of many gentlemen near me, with whom I had the honour of consulting, to have proposed a resolution for a *petition to Parliament* ; but that the lateness of the hour, and our having reason to think the motion would occasion a debate, and not meet with general concurrence, prevented my troubling the meeting with it. No notice was taken of the observation ; nor was any encouragement given me to proceed, nor have our newspapers of the North
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which favoured the world with an account of our proceedings, condescended to take any notice whatever of the circumstance. That an individual, no matter who, but supported, it was evident, by a respectable list of gentlemen; expressed a wish,—could they hope to prevail,—to procure from the meeting a petition to Parliament for a redress of the grievances we complained of, and of which legal and peaceable redress could only be obtained through Parliament,—*this* was a *fact*, in the history of *such* a Convention; which one even of ourselves, our secretary and historian, Mr. Joy, considered as either of *too much*, or *too little* importance to give to the public, amidst the details of our *acta eruditorum*, and the panegyrics of our *Angelic Doctors* and *Illustrissimi*.—It was no part of his own luminous system, nor of that of any bright and be-praised associate.—It was therefore of no importance to the public.—It could inform them of nothing.—It could set them to think upon nothing.—Nor should the fact be allowed to join its aid to my *express dissent** from the militia

* The dissent was express, and *repeated*, after hearing the arguments on the other side. Its not having been given by a *formal negative* on the *question*, justifies the printer of
the

militia resolution, in *disproving* the public assertion of our secretary and historian, that "the meeting—on *every question*,—terminated in *perfect unanimity*."

I should degrade myself, and feel it impossible to apologize to you, gentlemen, or to the public, for even mentioning these and many other particulars, which seem so insignificant in themselves, and so merely personal, did not these facts make, in my opinion, so many links in a chain of proofs, that the public mind has occasion to be *on its guard*, and to be *warned*,—that when, in the very commencement of a mere peaceable reform, arts such as I have mentioned will be condescended to by *the friends of liberty*, and by men who have *an interest in peace*,—when defamatory suspicions will be posted up and circulated in market-places,—when the private and the public ear will be poisoned, to suit the occa-

the resolutions, but not the *historian of the meeting*, in using the above-quoted words, in one of his publications. In the resolution on the militia, I see the more general word ministerial "*influence*," substituted for "*patronage*." The latter was, I recollect, the word against which I contended; and I believe it was the word which passed in the *Convention*.

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sion,

tion,—when men, bound by every tie of duty and delicacy, will pretend to give *facts* to the public, and give them not perfect, nor in their spirit, nor ungarbled, nor doing justice to individuals, nor doing justice to the public itself, nor free from unfair *insinuation*, where it is not dared to assert, or from unfair *suppression*, where disclosing the whole truth, might amount to a discovery or to self-conviction;—if such, I say, are the first fruits of attempts at a *peaceable reform*, and the first acts of some of our *most virtuous reformers*,—our people should be cautious how they harbour a *thought* of *such* changes, called by whatever name, as must be procured by *means* that would put their property, their lives, their honour,—*all—all* in the power of such men as may start up in a disordered state, and, seizing or hiring, and opening and closing at pleasure, the sources of public information, may thence poison and distract the public mind, deal out fame or infamy, as interest or ambition may require, make every thing a crime which a faction decrees such, nothing law, at length, but rapacity and ruin, and nothing justice but the will of assassins of life or reputation.

L E T T E R IV.

I HAVE already made some apology for eternal egotisms, for my little tales, and for the too frequent hero of them.—I trust, gentlemen, you will perceive that *principles* and *persons*,—*minute circumstances* and *important conclusions*,—have been so necessarily interwoven, that I shall stand absolved with you, either of trifling detail, or of any inordinate vanity, or of wanton personality. Should it be otherwise, the censure is only *one* of the risks which I have foreseen, and thought it my duty to encounter.

I am now to go still greater, and, it will seem, more unpardonable lengths, in personal accusation; lengths which I have, I might say industriously, endeavoured to prevent the necessity of, which, even after they became necessary, I have wished not to think such, and which now, did it seem possible, I would avoid,—for the sake of some of the persons who may appear involved;—for the sake of myself, who may suffer by it in the opinion of many;—and for the sake of the people, who, should I

even be justified in the opinion I have formed, may suffer a *temporary* injury, a temporary depression of a really constitutional spirit of reform, by the attempt to secure to them an apparently less immediate, but infinitely more important advantage,—that very Constitution, indeed, which they wish reformed. I am to prove some former assertions, not merely by a defence of myself, but *by attacking others*.—I am to prove, that if there is not, *in fact*, in many of our reformers a strong and dangerous disposition to republicanism, both the enemies and friends of reform have *reason to suspect*, or *fear* that there is. The *principle*, therefore, if it exists, must be met and guarded against; or the *suspicion* must be done away, by the explanation or correction of former mistakes.

In attacking others, I may be “crushed under foot”—but I shall leave it to those others themselves to determine, from my mode of attack, whether I am one of that description of their calumniators, “born (as they express it) to bite the heel.”

In making war on *the United Irishmen of Dublin*, I attack a society whose first establishment
and

and principles, in their spirit and general tendency, I approved; of whom, but for some trifling accidents, some lucky or unlucky circumstances in their formation, I should myself have been a member, or proposed as such.—I take liberties with a body of men, for some few individuals of whom, that I have lived in a degree of intimacy with, men of considerable talents, and I believe much private worth, I feel a personal, and even affectionate regard;—a body, to the great majority of whom, as individuals, I attribute perfectly good *intentions*, towards their country, and even its Constitution, so far as the majority have taken the trouble, or used the means, to understand it;—and to whom, as a society, I bear this testimony of my private opinion,—that they have contributed to raise, assimilate, and warm into new life and energy, the divided, and thereby depressed spirit of their countrymen. Happy, had they but known *where to stop*;—had they but recollected the difference immense, between seeing before one's eyes, a simple grievance (the *matter of fact* of Catholic depression) and the equally simple and only possible remedy (the *removal* of penalties and restrictions) and the developement of the thousand *complicated principles, and relations of moral and political science*, on the

correspondence and co-operation of which, the perfection, nay, probably, the very existence of our noble machine of Government (for noble, with all its faults, I will call it) must depend.—Happy, had they more justly appreciated their own capacity, and political rank, and power, and been content, rationally and substantially, to serve their country, less meretriciously ambitious to shine.

But why do I speak of appreciating their own capacity, rank and power?—This requires much capacity. Why speak of their rationally and substantially serving their country? This requires a cultivated understanding, and an enlarged political mind. Or, why speak of being free from all meretricious ambition of shining? How much political virtue does this require;—how pure, how severe a self-denial;—and how much superiority to the seductions, and infectious vanities, of leaders.

The *so very popular base* on which this society was formed, which might have been partly necessary at first, to extend, *in this city*, the principles of political union and mutual toleration, has made the society, *for any purpose of deep and complicated*

complicated disquisition, a popular herd,—a multitudinous monster,—incapable of leading, yet simple enough to think it does lead ;—while it is hood-winked, and haltered, and paraded about the lanes and alleys by its keepers ; then led home to its *menagerie*, and, getting a little more light fodder, wonderous in flavour, and admirable in strength and digestion, from the district of *Mont Blanc*, lays it down in most contented unhappiness, and dreams of its victories throughout all Europe, and of universal liberty and illumination —like its own.

I do not say that the principles of the Constitution are a perfect *mystery*, or that any particular body, or cast of men, are, either by inheritance or election, its only repositories, or the only priests who can initiate, or can explain it. But this I may say,—and surely all our republicans will, at least so far, agree with me ;—that these principles do not come down “*from Heaven*,” nor lie on the surface of the earth ;—they are not had by inspiration, or taken in by the senses ;—they are not objects of intuition ; and it is very well, they will tell us, if they are not *contrary* to *common sense*.

What

What then,—arguing *a priori*, or in the abstract, —what can be expected from a body of men, consisting of some two or three physicians, I believe, soaring, no doubt, (some of them) beyond ordinary description;—a very few lawyers, the majority, probably, not noticed according to their deserts, and some, belike, not averse to rising to fees or fame, from popularity;—some half dozen of attornies of much zeal, no doubt, and having besides, we may suppose, no violent objection to a *modicum* of certain city business;—some non-attending country gentlemen, who subscribed their characters to the cause, or to serve themselves in their counties;—some good substantial merchants, of whom a few have lent only their name to the society;—and a multitude of dealers, chapmen, and tradesmen, not one in fifty of whom can have thought much more of *the Constitution*, than is to be learned from a news-paper or a pamphlet, in coffee or in porter-house, in a debating society, or from a club in any of our alleys. Can it be thought that *all* or the *majority*, of these gentlemen, think for themselves on the deep points of Constitution, Law and Policy, lately and now before them?—If they do not, very few leaders, nay often a single leader, must save them and the nation the trouble of thinking. If they do think, or do their best at the business,—I fear they and
the

the nation may only gain by it more trouble some other way. For how, on such subjects, will they think?—Profoundly, no doubt!

He must be a desperate *aristocrate* who will deny, that coal-factors and tallow-chandlers are most worthy and useful citizens, in their calling;—and that they can do much to warm and illuminate our *houses*. But he must be an equally desperate *democrate*, who will contend that these honest gentlemen are, in the general, the best retailers of illumination for the *head*.—We may be plucked, and not taken-in, by a poplin-man in Francis-street; and New-row or Cut-purse-row may produce us good leather or good laces;—Bride's-alley furniture may be no way infested with *English-born* vermin; and Plunket-street may have most excellent cast frippery to dispose of:—yet it does not absolutely follow, that we must travel (as ancient sages did) into *such* bright regions, as the sources of science, and nurseries of legislators;—or that we should chuse to employ any of these gentlemen, as wholesale contractors, in *politically* furnishing, dressing, and trimming our Houses of Parliament. *Political and legislative wisdom*, we grant, with Paine, is not *hereditary*. We add to this *useful* and *applicable*

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maxim,

maxim, another ;—that—*a fortiori*,—it is not *be-
ven born and universal*.

But, as we are not all metaphysicians, more than all politicians, let us leave the argument, *a priori*, and judge of these Constitution makers or menders—“ *by their works*.” Here one might think, without a breach of charity (unless in respect to the great body of the society, and many honest members ; who, I am confident, are guiltless of any bad intention, nay guiltless often, as some of their leaders themselves may have been at times, of understanding the full, or at least apparent, meaning of the productions they gave their sanction to)—here, I say, one might think they *wished* to be “ but dimly seen,” and to reserve the purer dispensation, and last and express revelation, till the fullness of time ;—till our unsealed eyes are enabled, by custom, to bear the light,—and till our regenerated hearts are become enlarged enough to receive such an influx of celestial wisdom.

In this also,—as in the more obsolete revelation, we are to receive the glad tidings from babes and sucklings, from the simple—in *earthly* wisdom ; and the divine truths are to be, to those who
have

have any regard for the *present** world or generation—a stumbling-block; and, to all our vain philosophers—perfect foolishness.—“ If,” says *the book*, “ our Constitution be *imperfect*—nothing “ but a reform in representation will rectify its “ abuses;—if *perfect*,—nothing but *the same re- form* will perpetuate its blessings †.

“ Visions of *Nonsense*,—spare our aching sight!”

There is no mortal eye can bear their glory!
—If the Constitution be imperfect—make it per-

* “ In thus associating, we have thought little about *our ancestors*,—much of *our posterity*.” (Address of the Society, December 30, 1791).—These good gentlemen are very amiable in thinking so much about their posterity, and very pious and philosophic in thinking so little about their ancestors: And many of us will join them, with all our hearts, in thinking nothing at all, if they please, of *themselves*. But why don't they think a little of *other people*?—those of the *present day*,—those to whom, with their fine feelings, they must be so *attached*, their fathers, mothers, wives, mistresses, children, friends, &c.?

“ Perhaps you were right to *dissemble your love*;

“ But—why did you kick me down stairs?”

† Address to the Volunteers, or *Citizen Soldiers*, of Ireland, December, 1792.

fect ;—if perfect already,—make it *more* than perfect,—in other words, *less* than perfect :—make, or mend, or alter it *someway* ;—no matter whether it *requires* it or not ;—make, mend, and alter !—no matter whether, by *altering*, you *mend* ;—*still alter* !—alter, I say !—alter !—alter !—Nothing can be worse than it is at present ;—alter !—Every thing must be better than it is at present ;—alter !—“ Visions of glory,—spare our aching sight ! ”—Descend not upon us !—We are, indeed, but mortals !

Our Constitution being thus certainly to undergo a course of alteratives ; and “ the *same* reform ” being the specific, with which our Doctors are to cure, *either* of its great disorders,—perfection or imperfection,—we are to enquire how far these gentlemen appear, *from their declarations*, attached to the patient ; or whether, as it seems pretty plainly they work on the terms of “ no cure no pay,” they may not be willing enough to try a few of those *desperate remedies*, which sometimes cure, they tell us,—but sometimes kill. But to be somewhat more serious :—That the attachment of our United Irishmen to the Constitution is not, without some
shad w

shadow of reason, *suspected* by a great number of their countrymen, will appear, I think, from many circumstances; and, among the rest, from their eternally vilifying descriptions of our present Constitution;—from the spirit of republicanism ingeniously and painfully, it should seem, repressed in their publications; but which “from very affection,” and possibly from the natural incontinence of genius, appears bursting continually from its prudential inclosures;—from the scattered ideas they have already thrown out on what they would be pleased to call a reform; from the means of procuring a reform which they have insisted on; and from the language in which alone, almost, they will condescend to speak,—a uniform and serious affectation of the wretched watch-words and *moun-tebankries* of France. From all these, and many more such circumstances, does this *attachment* of their's appear; and, in fact, all these circumstances seem so happily and whimsically jumbled in almost every production, and sentence; that it would puzzle a school-man to separate them into heads—or say which proves this thing, which that. Every thing proves the whole; and from *Alpha* to *Omega*, from their linsey-wolfey preamble, to their delicate oath in music and metaphor, the
magnanimous

magnanimous soul of the society seems to perch and dance upon every point of a letter.*

But let us try to separate them if we can.—
 “ Without an *impartial* and *adequate* representation of the community (which certainly we *have not*, and, in their sense, never may have)
 “ WE AGREE *in* DECLARING,—We can have *no*
 “ Constitution—no Country—no Ireland. (Alas, poor Country,—poor Ireland!—*Who has them then?*—we shall hear. They are *in nubibus*,—and also in a *band-box*.) “ Without this,—our
 “ late revolution WE DECLARE to be *fallacious*
 “ and *ideal*;—(what—a *mere idea!*)—A thing
 “ much talked of—but neither felt nor seen.”
 (Why did not the gentlemen add—*nor understood?* it is a necessary part of the definition, and is, at least, equally true, it seems.) “ The act of
 “ Irish Sovereignty has been *merely tossed* out of
 “ the English Houses into *the cabinet of the minister*,—(Oh,—this means that the English minis-

* I mean to except their *declaration*, adopted from the original Society of Belfast, which itself is to be read with some grains of allowance. Every thing good, it should seem, is another's, and every thing bad their own.—“ Such is the power of mighty *mind!*”

ter *makes our laws for us!* That he has our Lords and Commons in his *red or green-box!*)
 “ and NOTHING remains to *the people*,—who, of
 “ right, are every thing,—but a *servile majesty*, and a *ragged independence*.”*

This I am really very sorry to hear;—that the English minister makes *all* our laws;—and that our Lords and Commons allow themselves to be put into the *strait-waistcoat*;—this is bad;—and that the people have *nothing* but *the majesty of being slaves*, and are little better, all the while, than so many *free and ragged sans-culottes*;—worse and worse!—Where will all this end?—Why, it must end, as they have told us it has already done in Scotland, which is absolutely *unpeopled* of late. There is not a living soul of them remaining. Their “ internal government ” was a perfect “ *chaos*,” for want of what they certainly wanted,—a reform;—and, as is natural in all your *chaoses* (where *wet and dry* contending, as Ovid tells us, neither can ever get the better) the whole people were metamorphosed immediately into *dust*,—mere “ dust in the balance ; ”—and when this was done, nothing was so natural as that this

* Circular Letter of the 30th of December, 1791.

same dust, (the people) should “ be *blown abroad* “ by the least impulse, and scattered through all “ other countries,—*merely* because they hang so “ loosely to their own.” Heaven preserve us!—where will *our light nation* be blown to? I hope not quite so far as to Botany Bay.

“ We address your *understanding*,—the *common* “ *sense* of the *common-weal*—(The sense of *all* the people, or of those only who have sense and knowledge enough to understand the *common-weal*?)—“ and we ask you, is it not a “ TRUTH, that where the people do not participate in the legislature by a delegation of representatives, *freely, fairly and frequently* elected, “ there can be NO *public liberty*? Is it not the “ FACT (murder will out) that, *in this country*, “ there is NO *representative legislature*; because “ the people *are not represented* in the legislature, “ and have NO *partnership* in the Constitu- “ tion?”

That this *is* the fact, they, after thus asking the question, condescend to prove. And how? Very simply. Because “ *every commoner*” has not a vote for his representative—or is not “ *actually represented*,”—therefore the people (meaning these

Commoners, *many* of whom *are* actually represented) have *no* representation;—because we have not “an *impartial* and *adequate* representation of *all* the people”—therefore, *none* of the people are represented—“the people are not (*at all*) represented in the legislature.”—Because they are not *all* partners in the Constitution—they “have *no partnership* in the Constitution;”—the people, like those of Scotland, have no *manner*, or *degree* of share in “the national firm,” nor of course, any share in the *national stock*,—which nevertheless they, very unconscionably, *live* upon. Because we have not the *very best* Constitution (and how *could* we have it, till these gentlemen *descended* upon earth,—for, surely, they were not *born*—to enlighten it)—we have “*no* Constitution;” because we have not *perfect* public liberty, we have “*no* public liberty;”—and because the people, “who, *of right*, are *every thing*”—are *not* every thing,—therefore they are *nothing* in the Constitution. The people, then, being certainly not “made for the Constitution,”—and being thus clearly,—nothing,—or “*as nothing, to the Constitution*,”—it follows, as clearly as that poor Hecuba barked and bit at the stones,—but, alas, without hurting the stones,—that the Constitution is *nothing to us—the people*:—

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“What

“ *What is the Constitution to us, if we are as nothing to the Constitution?*”—And “ *if the people do not constitute a part of it—(as they must, by this time, know from these gentlemen, they do not,—or they are dull indeed)—“ What is the Constitution to them more than the ghost of Alfred; and what are principles without practice, which they hear and read (there are principles, then, in this No-Constitution of our’s—to those who will hear and read them? this is some comfort :) to practice without principles, which the people see and feel?”*—The Constitution being thus clearly proved to be a ghost,—no matter whose ghost,—what have we, or what *ought* we to say to it—but this?—“ Unreal mockery,—hence!—Hence,—horrible “ shadow!—*Take any shape but this!*”

That the *administration* of a government does not necessarily depend on its *form and principles*,—that a government can possibly be excellent in theory, yet detestable in practice,—are opinions which, in this age, would consign a politician or philosopher to contempt, and appear unpardonable even in a poet.* When therefore any of the

* “ For *forms* of government let *fools* contest.

“ Whate’er is *best administered* is best.”

POPE.

illuminated

illuminated of the day describe our government as “ a *complicated system of national servitude and personal oppression*,—of perverted principle and “ base practice,—a burthen *so grievous and insupportable*,”—*we may fairly say; that they must shew, *unequivocally*, that they are as truly attached to the Constitution itself, as they profess themselves to be disgusted with its abuses; that if they cannot be blind to its faults, they feel, and are honest enough to acknowledge, its perfections,—else must we entertain something more perhaps than a suspicion,—that the theory and practice, the form and substance of the Constitution, appear to them equally defective, equally despicable; and the *whole*, in fine, a uniform and universal “ mass of corruption;” incapable, of course, of any cure, unless *the sword* would be a cure, or *such* a reform as would only be a *slower death*.

Now, so far are these gentlemen from acknowledging the merit of any part of our existing Constitution, that the most democratic, and the purest part (if any part there be which is either pure or democratic) is with them, it should

* Address to the Irish Nation, of January the 25th, 1793.

seem, but a system of downright and absolute corruption. “ Unless, say they, a reform *immediately* follows Catholic emancipation, the extension of the elective franchise would *only* add to the mass of corruption.”* This can only be on one of two suppositions ;—that *the added mass of electors* is, in itself, so corrupt, that the addition will, on the whole, rather corrupt than purify the Constitution, and rather injure than serve the people ; or, that *the Constitution itself*, in which this additional mass of electors is incorporated, is at once so corrupt and so infectious, that no addition or infusion can make it better, nor can any thing be added or infused, without becoming itself worse, and increasing instead of removing the evil. The first supposition is either an impossible one, or cannot be made by these gentlemen, or by any friend of Catholic emancipation. It seems then that they must either adopt the second, or admit that they have so indiscriminately, and, as far as words go, so mortally vilified the Constitution, that, until they condescend to explain themselves, we may say to them, without a violent breach of charity,—We acknowledge, gen-

* Address to the Friends of the People in London, October the 26th, 1792.

tllemen, you would be able pioneers in *a revolution*, but we must look a little farther about us, before we take you for our leaders in *a reform*.

But is it only in unqualified reprobation of our own Constitution that the principles of these gentlemen seem to appear? Do they *seem* to prefer to it any other form of government?—Do they adopt the principles at present most dangerous to established Constitutions, those of *republicanism*, or do the ideas of reform they have thrown out seem to *tend* that way? Both the one and the other, it should seem; as far as it can be supposed, that such principles, *if they entertained them*, could be professed without declared hostility against the Constitution, and without the risks which must attend such a declaration.

“ In *four words*, say they, lies *all our power*.
(Let us listen, now, for God’s sake, to their cabal!)—UNIVERSAL EMANCIPATION AND REPRESENTATIVE LEGISLATURE. Yet we are confident, that on the pivot of this principle (the *pivot of the principle of the four words!*) a Convention,—still less,—a society,—less still,—a single

“gle man—(any single man of the society is it—or only some prime enchanter?) will be able first “to *move*, and then to *raise* the world.” Without stopping to bow before these improvers upon Archimedes, or to wonder at the power of their miraculous pivot, out-doing so far the wooden peg of *Malumbruno* or *Pactolet*, let us try to find out what this same pivot is made of, as a means of discovering *how* it is to be fastened, and how twirled about, in the *head* of that (otherwise) lifeless animal, the people, whom these knights, squires and magicians, are to ride and guide, it seems, through the most aerial regions of reform.*

The

* See the renowned histories of *Don Quixote* and of *Valentine and Orson*. See also the Circular Letter of the Society, of the 30th of December, 1791. “We again entreat you to “look around for men fit to form those *stable supports* on “which *Ireland* may rest the *Lever of Liberty*. If there be “but *ten*, take those ten. If there be but *two*, take those “two. (If there be but *one*, I suppose they may make a *Pivot* or a *Pactolet* of him) and trust with confidence to the “sincerity of your intention, the justice of your cause, and “the support of your country.”

Archimedes again!—First, I suppose, the *fit men* in the country societies are to form the support or *fulcrum* of liberty-lever,

The gentlemen describe, themselves, “ the *capacity* and *comprehension* of this their *beloved* principle,” by means of whose, I suppose, equally beloved pivot, they are, collectively or individually, to work such wonders. No wonder they melt at the very idea, when “ it takes in every individual (*every man, and every woman too,—seriously, it does;—but its all in the way of principle;*) “ of the Irish nation;”—embraces them all;—casts an equal, and honest, eye over every mother and mother’s son of them ;——“ embraces

lever, which Ireland is to hold in her *own* hand,—when she gets *properly* personified or embodied. Then the mother society above here, or some single child of her’s, is to clap in the *pivot*, on which and round which, and up and down, and every way (it being a well-fitted pivot, and the lever a well-made lever) the whole is to turn :—and then Ireland and this society, or her “ single man” or man-child, will agree which of them shall hold the lever, and twirl the pivot, and how they are to use both, and to use each other,——and the whole will be settled;——and *the world* will be *moved*, and *raised*, and *kept up*, at any height required by the spectators;—and one end of the lever will be up,—and the other end then *cannot be down!*—O rare philosophy! Benign and great spirit of *More*, and divine spirit of *Plato*, how eclipsed are your lofty visions! Hear of *our* Republic, and *our* Utopia, and blush for the cold barrenness of your hearts and imaginations!

“ all

“ all that *think* (and do *not* think) and feels for
 “ all that *suffer* (and do *not* suffer!)”—If this
 be not philanthropy,—where, on earth, is phi-
 lanthropy to be found?—If this be not *all* “ in
 the sincerity of their souls,” where does sincer-
 ity exist?

But not only does it seem that, to emancipate
 all,—*all* are *actually* to be represented in the le-
 gislature;—it is laid down that our *whole le-*
gislation must be *representative*. If the words,
 “ a representative legislature,” mean any thing
 less than this,—that we are to have literally,
 and *bona fide*, a *French constitution*,—a *representa-*
tive democracy,—then have words no meaning.
 It was no more *necessary* that the “ whole pow-
 er” of the society should reside “ in *four* words”
 than in five, or in six, or in any other number,
 however innocent or good kind of words they
 might be. It cannot be conceived that the ex-
 pence of a few words more, to express their *real*
meaning in, would seem so great to gentlemen,
 who, if not masters of *words*, are masters of no-
 thing under heaven. Nor is it obviously to be
 conceived, that a mere fondness for the quaint,
 the far-fetched, and the *outré*, or an infantine
 fondness for a coral-and-bells, would tempt a
 whole

whole society to repeat, and repeat again, words conveying a *perfectly different meaning* from what the thinking, or rather leading part of it, *intended* either to be expressed or to be collected from them, “ A representative legislature is the *polar star* of our political salvation* :”—“ *Natural right*, too, and *eternal justice* ought EVER, we are told, to be established *without compromise or reservation†*.” Yet *entire natural right*, and *artificial or political orders* seem, at first sight, a little at variance; and that they are as much so in their *effects* as in *principle*, these gentlemen sufficiently unfold. “ *Every other rank*,” we are told, “ *conspires*” with the House of Commons against *the people*—“ against their *privileges*, their *pleasures*, their *homely happiness*, their *fire-side enjoy-*

* Address to other Societies of United Irishmen, November the 30th, 1792. See also the address to the Delegates of Reform in Scotland, November the 23d, 1793. “ *Universal emancipation with representative legislature*, is the polar principle which guides our society, and shall guide it, through all the tumult of factions and fluctuation of parties.” See also *the four words* in the address to the Citizen Soldiers, November the 30th, 1792.

† Address to the Friends of the People at London, October the 26th, 1792.

P

“ *ments.*”

“*ments.*”—Just heaven! what *fiends*, what *devils*, does this thing called *rank* or *privileged order* make of mankind,—if this be the description of its *rage* against the people who support them?—And if, as these gentlemen tell us, these higher ranks are but “the ballustrades which *adorn* the arch,”—if they do not form *any part* of what, as a cement at least, “*supports*” the arch,—and if they thus demoniacally conspire against the whole happiness of the unfortunate, devoted people, who, *without any recompence*, it seems, or *any political use* or *necessity*, support them,—why!—why I ask, should the people allow such a destructive ornament, for an instant, to continue? Why should “natural right and eternal justice,” for an instant, be “compromised” or deferred? and why should not “a *national House of Commons*, in its origin, its form, its features, “and its spirit, reverencing the people, and not “conspiring, with every other rank, against “them*”—why should not *such* a House of Commons be established; and when established, why should it not extirpate those hordes of conspirators against the people and against itself?—Why should it not sweep away those useless and de-

* Address to the Irish Nation, January the 25th, 1793.

structive ornaments,—a king, and lords, and landlords, and gentlemen,—establish *natural right* in its full and unmixed, and imprescriptible, and incontrollable sovereignty,—establish in fine, “liberty and equality,—or, in *two* words (which are but the half of four)—establish “*representative legislature*,”—which would soon establish *all the rest*?

Well!—and suppose they *did* establish *liberty* and *equality*?—They are no bad things,—permit us to tell you; and we shall prove it. And suppose we did “level” *a little*? That is no bad thing either,—if done with wisdom. Let us hear.—“It is *only* by the *military array* of men “in whom the people confide, (the Volunteers) “that *obedience* can be secured to *existing law* in “the *speedy resurrection* of a *free Constitution*,—“of *liberty* and *equality*,—words which we use “for the purpose of repelling calumny, and of “saying, that,—by *liberty*, we never understood “*unlimited freedom*; nor by *equality*, the *levelling* “of property, nor the *destruction* of subordination*.” For this the Constitution is much obliged to them:—say not even the French the same?

* Address to Citizen Soldiers.

And might not men of much less ingenuity than these gentlemen, *act* as the French have done, or ever proposed to do, and defend themselves on the letter, perhaps on the spirit, of these phrases? They are not for *unlimited* freedom,—unless it be “*natural right without compromise or reservation.*” But if compromise they must,—*what limits* will they allow? They have not yet *expressly* told us. It is hoped they will. In the mean time, we must try to *conjecture* what they are likely to be, from the *hints* they have thrown out, and the necessary or natural *implications*, that evidently lurk in their *profession of faith*, given “for the purpose of repelling calumny,” and therefore expressed, we are to suppose, so as clearly to convey their meaning. It *may* be no part of their system “to *level* property,”—that is, *utterly* to level *all* property; but an *Agrarian law*, or many other laws useful in republics, and occasionally most useful in revolutions, might remove *much* of the present inequalities of property. As little may they intend to destroy *all* subordination. There can be no government without *some* subordination. France herself *establishes* what she calls the subordination of virtue, industry, and talents;—subordination to *elected magistrates*,—to *public functionaries*;

ries ;—subordination to them *while* permitted to be magistrates or functionaries ;—subordination to them,—*till* the next revolution.—But where, here, is any subordination reserved to *ranks* and *orders* ? To *hereditary* legislators—not to speak of a king ;—neither of them, surely, parts of “ a representative legislature,”—nor *consistent*, either of them, with the *unreserved* and *uncompromising* establishment of “ natural right ?”—If the king and the lords were removed, would this destroy *subordination* ?—No !—they might tell us,—there might be another and better, and truly natural subordination,—which could not suffer, but would be established by their destruction.—Would their removal destroy *property* ?—“ Still less.”—The removal of both would save money to the nation* ;” and give it, (*viz.* its *then* honest rulers) a property to divide.—Would their removal be *levelling* ? “ Less still.”—“ As if *the only leveller* was not the *despot*, who crushes with an iron sceptre every

* I am told it was thrown out in the Northern Star, a Belfast news-paper, that when the nation had a *reform*, the poor people would have tobacco at *four pence a pound*; in other words, *duty-free*. This was an argument well put. And if a reform would do so much, what might not a revolution do ?

rank and degree of society into one*!"—Nothing, we have seen, is public liberty that is not *perfect* public liberty ;—nothing a Constitution, that is not a *perfect* Constitution ; so nothing levels, that does not bring *all* to a *dead-level* ; and *none* but this *dead-level* is, it seems, a constitutional or political evil ! These gentlemen then, are not *levellers* ; not one of them, we rejoice in admitting, is yet a despot, at least in power.—But while they deny that any of them is a King or an Emperor, they seem inclined to go as far as they well can, in confessing themselves of the opposite description,—to wit, *republicans*. “ They “ are *so far* republicans, as to desire a *national* “ House of Commons—not *conspiring*,—with “ *every other rank*,—against *the people*, their *privileges*, pleasures, &c.”—Such patriots as they, believing so solemnly in *such* a conspiracy against the people, could have no violent objection, one should think, to remove *entirely* the *ranks* which conspire, as well as the nominal representatives who by them are seduced into the conspiracy. If these conspiring ranks were described by them as any thing better than *mere* and *expensive ornaments*, of the Constitution, we might think other-

* Address to the Irish Nation, January the 25th, 1793.

wife.

wife. And we should be in absolute despair, and should expect the entire and immediate dissolution of the Constitution, if we were not assured of their attachment to *one* part, *one* “fundamental principle of the Constitution,”—(and it is the *only* part, besides the elective franchise of the people, on which I recollect them to have expressed themselves with any feeling, bordering on enthusiasm or even approbation:)—it is—*that* “*republican or democratic energy,*” which, “as well as “aristocratical privilege, or regal prerogative, is “sanctioned by the fundamental principles of the “Constitution, by all those memorable precedents “which form its first features; and by which the “just and virtuous struggles of our ancestors, recognized by successive generations, *point out to us their posterity, WHEN they ought to INTERPOSE, and HOW LONG they ought to SUFFER*.*” Whether they think *this* the time to interpose,—or that the nation should *longer suffer*,—and *how* they would interpose,—the whole tenor and spirit of their addresses, to countrymen and to solicited confederates, to *Citizen Soldiers*, and to *the soldiers of seduction* may somewhat explain.

* Address to the Irish Nation, January the 25th, 1793.

That this is pretty nearly the time for the people to interpose, we are scarce permitted to doubt, when we read their *counter-proclamation**, —“ Citizen Soldiers, TO ARMS!” —“ We will not “ at this day, say they, condescend to quote authorities for the right of having and of using “ arms (I suppose, of using, and of declaring an intention of using them, in *any possible manner?*) “ but we will *cry aloud*, even amidst the storm “ raised by the witchcraft of a proclamation, that “ to your formation was owing the peace and protection of this island, (so far true :) That to “ your relaxation (which was almost as necessary as their formation) has been owing its relapse in “ to *impotence* and *insignificance*, — (a relapse which has not yet happened;) — to your *renovation* must “ be owing its *future freedom*, and its *present tranquillity*. You are therefore summoned *to arms*. — “ IN ORDER to preserve your country in that guarded quiet, which may secure it from *external hostility*, and to maintain that *internal regimen throughout the land*, which, *superfeding* a notorious police, or a suspected militia, may preserve “ the blessings of peace, by a *vigilant preparation*

* Address to the Volunteers of Ireland, published in December, 1792.

for war."—What *species* of war was to be prepared for,—what species of "*internal regimen*" seems intended,—whether the insinuated purpose was to guard against "*external hostility*," may be collected from their denouncing, at the same moment, "*a suspected—Fencible Militia*,"—from summoning *their* soldiers (they suppose them) to arm "*in spite*" of such a militia, "*and in virtue* (ingenious virtue!) of two proclamations"—(one of them issued against men arming on the very principles of this summons of alarm;—*the National Guards*)—and from the wish which "*they cannot help*" expressing, "*that all soldiers, partaking the passions* (yes, the *passions*!) "*and interest of the people, would remember, that they were once citizens,—that seduction made them soldiers,—but nature made them men.*"—It is, one should think, rather a new way of "*preparing*" for a *foreign* war, to persuade the soldiers that it is their *duty* to *desert*. It is rather a symptom that the country itself is internally "*in danger*,"—but not *merely* from its bad government,—when soldiers, who had taken an oath of fidelity to their king, are to be *lessoned* into the christian casuistry that their duty to man, to nature, or the God of nature, now requires of them a *holy, civic perjury*.

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jury. This indeed is *vigilance*,—this indeed is *preparation*;—it is morality, it is patriotism, it is religion! It would be the very thing they profess to aim at,—“ *internal regimen throughout the land* ;”—the regimen of such men as can hold, or continue to be seduced by such language;—the wretched tyranny of wretched tyrants and (were it not for their delusion and innocence) their still more wretched slaves.

But it would answer little purpose thus to prepare the foldiers of every description for this *empire of peace*, if the people at large were not with equal vigilance prepared for it. To them, therefore, *one and all*, it became necessary, it should seem, to dispense a revelation of *glad-tidings*, not more new than it is extraordinary, summed up in that most convenient and most comprehensive, and no doubt, most palatable, of all popular principles,—that *they ought to be able to do with impunity—only—whatever they pleased to do*;—no more!—These amiable, tender-hearted gentlemen, these friends to liberty without licentiousness, to the *Constitution*, and to *No-Constitution* of their country, “ WISH, they tell the people, to
 “ PROSCRIBE *such an incongruous and monstrous*
 “ *conjunction*

“ *conjunction of terms as PENAL LAW, not only*
 “ *from a digest of the laws, but from the dictionary*
 “ *of the language*!*” But we may pass this by,
 as a piece of such precious nonsense, that ignorance and turbulence themselves, all the demons of discord and all the furies united, could not have sent it into the world, had they considered, for a single moment, the consequences of such a declared doctrine *to their own character*, if they were as indifferent as demons and furies could be, to all its consequences on *the opinions and conduct of the people*. Independent, however, of this rhapsody,—this flight of genius, scorning and soaring above *all art and cunning* too,—they tell the people what *their Society*, emphatically, “ *does desire†*,” and what they the people must desire too and insist on, no doubt,—“ if not sunk in the lethargy of corruption.”—“ Yes, countrymen, say they, we do desire that *extended liberty*, which may allow you, as citizens, to do *what you will*,—provided you do not injure another, or

* Address to the Irish Nation, January the 25th, 1793, on the absolute necessity of provincial and national conventions.

† Ibid.

“ rather to do *all the good you can to others,*—
 “ without doing injustice to yourselves.” That
 there is an innocent and constitutional sense in
 which these words may be taken, and that many
 who approved, understood them, if they under-
 stood them at all, in some such sense, I am not
 disposed to deny:—but neither, I think, can it
 be denied, that the words bear also a sense and
 application much more flattering to the popular
 mind, and which the people, lectured and ad-
 dressed as they here are, would be much more
 likely to adopt than the constitutional and safe one.
 This “ extended power of doing what they
 “ will,—all the good they can, &c.”—they would
 probably chuse to enjoy, subject to limitations of
 which *they the people only* should be the judges;
 —which would get rid of all *unreasonable con-*
troul, all the *conspiracies* of other ranks against
 them, and *only* make them *the sovereign*, and
 the government a democracy. The very next
 sentence seems to put out of doubt the meaning,
 or at least the probable effect, of these words.
 “ Yes countrymen, we do wish for an *equality of*
 “ *rights*, which is *constitutional*,—not an equality
 “ of *property*, which is *impossible*.” The rights
 of *the lowest commoner*, it should seem then, are
 to be equal to those of the *Lord of Parliament*,
 and

and the rights of both lord and peasant to those of *the king*? we shall then, no doubt, *have and keep* a king and lords; for these peasants and commoners of all kinds will never find out that *inequality* is not *equality*; nor will any body ever whisper in their ear,—that *lords* are but *men*, or that the crown is become “*a crown of thorns*,” as our society have on some occasion, well described it, —“ Yes, countrymen, we *do long for*, (how they wax warm in kind-heartedness!) we *do long for* “*another equality and we hope yet to see it realized*.”—(Now, indeed, comes “the new order of things!”)—An equality consisting in the “power of *every father of a family* to acquire, “by labour, either of body or mind, something “beyond a mere subsistence,—some little capital “to prove, in case of sickness, old age, or misfortune, a safe-guard for his body and his soul, “a hallowed hoard, that may lift him above the “hard necessity which struggles between conscience “and corruption; that may keep his heart whole “and his spirit erect, while his body bends beneath its burden; make him fling away the wages “of venality, and proudly return to an humble “home, where *a constitution that looks ALIKE on the “palace and the hovel*,—may stand at his hearth, “a tutelar divinity, and spread the Egis of equal
“ law,

“ law, to guard him from the revenge of those
 “ who offered him the bribe, and offered it in
 “ vain.*.”

Is this addressed to *the people*, or is it not?
 And in what climate, in what country, in what
 sublunary world, and under what dispensation of
 creative or governing wisdom, have we been born
 and do we live, if this old new *golden age*,—this
 dream of poetry, this despair of philanthropy,
 philosophy and common-sense, *can* be “ realized”
 among us?—And, *if realized it cannot be* ;
 —if, among us, *under every conceivable constitution*,
 there must be crowds of persons weak in
 body, in mind, and in means even of subsistence,
 —weak in one or all of these, from nature,
 from habits, or from accident,—unable to
 “ hoard,” happy to be able to live,—exposed to
 temptations, because they are men, and to injuries,
 because others also are men,—if palaces and
 hovels, so long as nature is nature, and property
 exists, there *must* be,—if *no equality of law*
 can make the palace a hovel, or the hovel a palace,
 —can, *in every thing* equalize their protection,
 or, to the eye of the world at least, or

* Address to the Irish Nation, January the 25th, 1793.

perhaps in any view, can equalize their enjoyments ;—what shall we say of the men,—if they had considered,—if they knew what they do,—(which, surely a great majority of them do not!)—who take from the unhappy poor even the slender and precarious enjoyments allotted them ;—who poison the little happiness within their reach, by teaching them to grasp at phantoms not in nature—who take from them cheerful industry and humble content, and moderated or repressed passions, and kindness to neighbours and gratitude to benefactors, while they inspire them with idle and often rapacious and unprincipled discontent, ferocious animosities, and brooding sentiments not of unthankfulness merely, but hatred and revenge ; who teach them, that evils of life, and of their fortune, are owing *entirely* to the intolerable oppression of a tyrannical constitution, to a wicked and systematic conspiracy of all the rich and all the great against their domestic, and homely, and, God knows, little enviable happiness?—What language is adequate to the branding of practices, which, at a time of such ferment, when almost every thing seemed practicable, nothing impossible, if men but dared to rush forward,—play before the eyes of the ignorant and unwary multitude such distracting illusions ;

sions; scattering firebrands, scattering ambiguities; now bolting out some tremendous maxim, as in scorn of caution, now feebly explaining or half-retracting, not as in candour, but as if the covering were to be visibly affected, and still leaving the original strong impressions to work their way into the popular heart, and to be there, in the most poisonous sense perhaps, received and cherished, nay, to acquire new venom, and perfect fatality, from the uncultivated judgments and excited frenzies to which they are addressed and accommodated.

Such are the principal opinions and sentiments with which their country and the world have been favoured, by this wonder-working society. They speak sufficiently, it should seem, the *kind* of reform they would aim at, and the *means* they would use. That the workmanship exceeds the materials, their stile the sentiment, cannot be said, where both are incomparable. The passages quoted shew, that they suit each other to a miracle—" *conjurant amice*" may be said of them to the very letter. As they hold out France forever, as a sort of inspired instructor and perfect model,—so must they forever speak *her language*;—our *own*,—the language of *Britain*,—that language, Heavens!

Heavens! which bore our Milton through Pandemonium, through Chaos, and through the Empyrean,—which raised his Satan, and his Devils, as far above the Gods of the mighty Homer himself, as our religion is above brutality,—*this* language wants nerve, wants fire, wants soul, to express the immortal conceptions of every strutting devotee of modern manhood!—Hence does this august society take every “affiliated society” under her maternal wings.—Hence, when she sends forth her epistles, pastoral or evangelical,—“*you have our ideas. Answer us, and that quickly. This is not a time to procrastinate.*” Hence are our Volunteers called on, as from the dead, by the powerful incantation of—*Citizen Soldiers*;—hence do city journeymen-manufacturers start into *National Guards*.—For “laws amidst arms,” we have “liberty and equality;”—and, for a Constitution including a sovereign to whom we restored that insignificant, unhappy thing, *a free kingdom*, we have *a harp* (an unstrung, bloody harp!) *without a crown**. Hence is almost every
 thing

* “*Inter arma Leges*”—one of the mottoes of the Lawyer’s Corps.—“Liberty and Equality,” it is said, with the device of a Bonnet of Liberty, and a pike—(their enemies

thing an *organ* which is no actual part of our Constitution, nothing *organized*, it should seem, that is so. The *society* is every way respectable,—because they “fit, *without mace or beadle* ;”—*Parliament* is only to be laughed at,—being “a “ *mystery, a craft, a corporation.*” And hence the fun himself, our good old drudge the fun, who does our ordinary business pretty punctually and well, and for whom it is not clear we have yet “ *a substitute,*”—even he will not be permitted to *shine* on a *county meeting*,—unless it meet in the form of an *electoral body* deputed by *primary assemblies*. If met in any other way, or for any other purpose than to chuse Delegates to a Provincial Convention, or as preparatory to a National one, the freeholders, however numerous,—even after “three millions” have entered “the “ temple” of the Constitution,—can be but “a “ *few freeholders shivering in the corner of a “ county hall,*”—without *right* or *competency* to express the authoritative will of the nation,—

called it a dagger) and a Harp without a Crown, were among the intended ensigns of the National Guards.—It is but fair to mention that these (if they really existed, as described) were no otherwise imputable to the Society spoken of, than as consequences of the unregulated zeal of some of its members, or some individuals of the multitude infected by its extravagances.

and,

and, it should seem, from the contempt with which they are treated as an *ordinary* or *recognized* body in the Constitution, without right to declare, or power to contribute to the public cause by declaring, *their own* will or opinion*. From the same cause also, and from the insinuated *promise* of a community *perfectly equalized*, has the

* “ Trust as little to your friends as to your enemies in a
 “ matter where *you can act only by yourselves*. The Will of
 “ the Nation must be declared before any Reform can take
 “ place. It is not therefore any class however numerous, any
 “ society however respectable, any subaltern assembly, that
 “ have either right or competency to express that authoritative will. *Nothing less than the people can speak for the*
 “ *people*.—This competency resides not in a few freeholders
 “ shivering in the corner of a county hall, but only in the
 “ whole community represented *in* each county (as at present
 “ in Antrim) by parochial delegation, and then *from* each
 “ county by baronial delegation, to provincial conventions,
 “ the *union* of which must form the awful will of the people
 “ of Ireland.”—Address to Citizen Soldiers.

Thus, we see *the nation* means representatives sent to a *National Convention*, by the French mode of election;—and *its will* the will of *these representatives*. Yet the nation is to do *every thing for itself*;—to trust *neither friend nor foe*,—in other words, to trust no living soul *except* the men, and the creatures and devotees of the men, who give advice so *disinterested* so *safe* and so *practicable*.

little addition of *Esquire*, heretofore not absolutely despised, at least in the country, and almost as “good cheap” as that of *gentleman* in the law,—been so discredited and discarded, that the *Squire* of the parish himself cannot venture to use it on a Sunday; and every *friend of the people* that is clapped into a *resolution-chair*, whatever be his title, or whatever his trade, steps ye forward into the world,—with a most charming modesty,—plain *himself*,—plain *Coriolanus*, in other words, or plain *Cato*!—Hence too has a society, which poor Mr. Young, the philosophical farmer, takes, in his fright, for a *Jacobin Club*, been almost ruined in character in the North for no better or more *constitutional* reason, that I have been able to find out, than because they are *not* Jacobins,—because “they are not violent enough”—and because they have a *Duke* at their head, and a few Members of Parliament of their body.—Hence has the imagination of the people been seduced, and hence, if the seduction should continue, would even the morality of the people be corrupted, by the general following of a sort of stile (*composition*, it may be truly called) which Sparta would have despised as unmanly, Athens as tasteless and vicious; one so spiced and bepeppered, that it must render the mental palate

3

callous.

callous, at length, to every thing not irritating and inflaming, to every thing simple, nutritious, and digestive into common-sense, and preserving the tone of natural feeling; a stile of *centos* and fragments, raked from the degeneracies of ancient Rome, or copied,—*polygraphed*, I was going to say,—from the affectations of sickly France;—bloated, stilted, theatric, mountebank, false;—ever straining after the splendid, not content with even the luminous, if it have the misfortune to be solid;—substituting jingle for sense, stage-trick for grace, rant for feeling, witticism for warmth, and a play of fire-works for eloquence; sacrificing truth itself to some unhappy antithesis, and risking the peace of an empire for an alliteration.

The labours of this society approached their crisis or consummation, when the summons to arms issued to the Citizen Soldiers. Government and the people seemed now fairly at issue—That “*committal* of national character seemed already “made,”—which once made,—though ever so rashly,—the nation had been told, by the very persons who thus committed them, they could not retreat, unless with “infamy and oblivion.”—We then had *only*, it seemed, “*to advance*”
“*with*

“ *with active, not passive perseverance, with man-
 “ ly confidence and calm determination, smil-
 “ ing with equal scorn at the bluster of official
 “ arrogance, and the whisper of private malevo-
 “ lence,—until we had planted the flag of freedom
 “ on the summit, and were at once victorious and
 “ secure*.*”

Not to be alarmed at such a state of things, not to take some measures to avert the impending calamities, seemed blindness, or insensibility, or neutrality, or conspiracy. A new society, “ the Friends of the Constitution, Liberty and Peace,” now therefore came forward with an address to the nation, certainly not a faultless one, nor thought so by themselves, but which it seemed necessary to hazard, however hasty or imperfect, in order to save the Constitution from perhaps instant danger, and to avert the horrors of a civil war from the nation. I mention the circumstance, not for the purpose of defending this society against the misapprehensions even of so respectable a man and writer as Mr. Young, nor with the paltry view of raising *its* charac-

* Address to the Delegates for Reform in Scotland, November the 23d, 1792.

ter by depressing that of the society whose conduct I am treating with, I think, necessary severity;—but for the purpose of mentioning a *fact* worthy of some attention, in the subject before us;—that, at the moment when this declaration of the Friends of the Constitution, &c. was published, they knew not that the Constitution itself, which they bound themselves personally to defend, would stand many months. Some of them had reason to fear,—on the authority of information, not rashly, they thought, to be despised,—that the attempt might *then* be *too late*; that the opinions and views of a great majority of the people were then become decidedly and determinedly republican; that a reform, having been so long deferred, would not then *satisfy* the people; and that an attempt to stem or turn this popular torrent, would be fruitless as to the Constitution, and probably destructive to the feeble opposers. The experiment, however, seemed worth the hazard;—and it was made, with that mixed anxiety, resolution, and exultation, which marked no vulgar attachment to country, and to that Constitution which was to confirm its liberty and ensure its peace. If the declaration of this society did not save the Constitution, or preserve peace, it assuredly *contributed* to both these purposes,

poses, or *tended*, at least, to compose that ferment in the popular mind, the consequences of which, perhaps, no man could foresee.

A reform, as well as the preservation of the Constitution, a reform indeed, even as a means of preserving the Constitution,—having become an object, it seemed necessary to bring back within the limits of constitutional pursuit, those who, from whatever cause or motive, had strayed from the path, and whose errors might, it was thought, do essential injury, either by misleading their supposed numerous followers, or by alienating the timid or cautious friends of reform.—Some reputed leaders among our United Irishmen were therefore requested to explain, if they would not retract, certain passages in their Citizen-Soldier manifesto; particularly the phrase “a Representative Legislature,” the impropriety of which seemed not to have been considered, and to be then admitted; and it was hoped that something of this kind might have been done. But there are, in proportion, still fewer societies than individuals, who consider either the duty, or the point of honour, of retracting an error; and it is probable that neither the general censure passed by the new society on *sedition, levelling tenets, and intemperance,*

intemperance, nor the prosecution then just commenced against two members of the United Irishmen, for distributing this very address to the Citizen Soldiers, contributed to dispose these gentlemen to the measure recommended;—or if some of them were so disposed, their voice was drowned in the crowd.

Instead therefore of any explanation, or any thing amounting to an explanation, of expressions either obnoxious or misconceived;—instead of any resolution to support—(no matter whether from mere abstract opinion, or from conviction of political propriety and expediency)—our Constitution, when reformed;—instead of any declaration that they would support the *Monarchy*, and the *House of Peers* which, after their repeated homage to principles apparently tending to subvert these branches of the legislature, it might be natural enough to have expected, or required from them;—the society,—to remove “the artfully and groundlessly-excited fears” of “well-intentioned and sincere friends of reform,”—declared only, that the object “of their institution was (it might be thought they meant to say it *then* was, and even then it might seem, perhaps, not their *only* object) an impartial and adequate

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“Representation

“ Representation in Parliament*.” A representation which, if taken with all their previously declared political opinions, commentaries, effusions, and hints, might well pass for a *legislature entirely and absolutely representative*, if not in its *direct institution*, yet in its *necessary consequences*. The nation, it seemed, was to be represented *per capita*, or individually and actually,—which would be “ *impartial* ;”—and it was scarce to be *supposed*, that any thing less than a purely representative legislature would be “ *adequate*” to the purposes of that “ *extended liberty*,”—that “ *equality of rights*,”—that *perfectly equal* independence, protection, happiness, &c. &c.—(not to mention the proscription of *penal law*)—which the people had been taught to expect from what it was thought proper to call the *reformed* or *renovated* Constitution.

But the society did worse than *not explain* their former publication, or their mis-conceived and calumniated opinions. They resolved, that “ it was the *duty* of every member to distribute their “ public resolutions ;” and that, if the gentlemen accused really distributed *that* address, “ they, “ in so doing, acted agreeable to the sentiments, and “ therefore merited the approbation of the society.”

* Resolutions of December the 23d, 1792.

Thus

Thus did they resolve,—either that the address was in itself, defensible and proper; or that it was the duty of every member of their society to distribute *all* their resolutions, *however improper or indefensible*. The latter principle they cannot profess; for it would, morally speaking, something more than qualify them for the society of Botany Bay. It would be professing themselves *Men of the Mountain*—conspirators against all mankind, or against all whose interest and views differed from their's, or those of their leaders. They must then have adopted the former opinion, which defends their address as *proper in itself*; and it rests with the public to judge of them, as a society, by what they have published, and by what, even after warning and admonition, they continue to defend.

But perhaps we mistake this matter all the while, and they are a marvellous proper, and most constitutional society, and have nothing to answer for, unless it be an original sin of an uncommon sort, one acquired, not lost, at their political baptism. From the day of the birth of the society (I think they somewhere tell us the very day) to that still more auspicious one, when they *out-manifested*, if I may not say *out-lawed*, the king and our lord lieutenant, they *did*, they *published*—

nothing in the least degree improper ;—nothing under heaven,—and, *for proof* if you require proof,—lo,—(as they say) *their test*, “ adopted “ on *the establishment* of the society, and uniformly-taken by every member on his admission :” a proof as satisfactory, as if, on an indictment for any little offence, such as treason, murder, &c. it were given in evidence, that the fact was *impossible* ; for that the young gentleman, the prisoner, was *born* somewhat above twenty-one years before, and that *then* he was a sweet little cherub ; that he cried a little, indeed, at times, and did his best to disturb the nurse and the family, but that he was not able to make much noise, and upon the whole, was as innocent as any of their lordships on the bench. With *such* a defence the court and jury could not but be satisfied : it must disarm even those merciless “ solicitors of law and “ general attorney’s,” who, we are told*, “ nearly blasted in their cradle” these gentle babes,—

“ The most replenished *sweet work of nature*.

“ ————— *girding one another*

“ *Within their innocent alabaster arms !—*

“ *A book of prayers upon their pillow !—*

There is, we’re told, a wise bird, the Ostrich, and another bird called (from its wisdom, I do

* Address to the Nation, January 25th, 1793.

suppose) *the Dotterel*, which, if closely pursued, hide their head, a little beyond the eyes, in some bush, and then think themselves as safe and as snug, as if neither feather nor hinder-parts were exposed to shot or discovery. It would be un-sportsman-like, it would be a crying sin, to shoot at the poor animals in this their self-satisfied state of security and composure; but, surely, it is not required of human virtue—not to laugh at them.

LETTER

L E T T E R V.

I THINK I have now shewn that if there did not exist in this country *a spirit of republicanism* that might endanger the Constitution, there had at least appeared such *symptoms* of that spirit, as justified a degree of apprehension, and required from the true friends of reform,—but particularly from all *extraordinary conventions* of the people or their delegates,—such explicit declarations and strong counteraction as might check the progress of dangerous opinions, remove suspicion of their own motives, and promote that union, without which there is no strength. It appears, I think, that a plain man *might* declare such apprehensions without its following incontestibly, that he either fabricated, or was infected by, “a ministerial calumny” against the people.—I was prepared to have proved this at Dungannon, by reading passages from several of the publications I have criticised, and from a few others in the same spirit, which have appeared in the Northern Province, but particularly from the town of Belfast.

I thought

I thought at first it would be necessary to do in these letters, what I had intended partly to do at Dungannon ; not only to trace the opinions I speak of through the publications of the *Arch-society* in town, the mother and instructress of all the little ones, but to shew, by other publications, that great bodies of the people appeared either to have been apt scholars, or to have anticipated their teachers. I am happy, however, to think I need not enter into so disagreeable a detail.—The principles and opinions I should condemn in certain people of the North, and those I have already criticised in members of the Provincial Convention, and in the United Irishmen of this town, are so much the same, differing only in a little more or less of dress or colouring, of the wild or the extravagant, &c. &c. that any minute discussion of the former seems unnecessary ; and our United Irishmen here holding evidently the grand sabbath of spells and infection, the exposure of their mysteries, and of the “ double-sense,” in which they juggle and palter with the objects of their delusion, must undeceive the people, or nothing from me can.

But, besides ; not only the people in general who have been most forward in our late political warfare, but a great majority of the very
society

society which has chiefly misled them, may well be supposed, *innocent* in their motives, and *pardonable* even in the exceptionable part of their conduct. The *general principles* on which they set out, making allowance for perhaps too much warmth, or for some unguardedness of expression, natural to persons dwelling in imagination on the public grievances which it is their professed object to remove, appear to me not only praise-worthy, but highly so. It is only on account of *subsequent extremes and perversions of those principles*, that either reprobation or reprehension seems deserved; and for these I consider *the leaders only* as properly accountable.

That some, even of those leaders, did not understand certain most exceptionable expressions and measures in their real and proper sense, I have reason to believe. The allowances to be made for the manner in which the majority of *followers* understood these things may thence readily be conceived. These gentlemen confide, in the general, much more than they criticise, and, so they are tickled, and dazzled, and confounded, they are content.—I can the more easily make allowances for the majority of this or any popular assembly, when I recollect that I attended myself very imperfectly to the spirit and tendency of these productions,

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on hastily reading them when they came out; nor should I probably have perceived that *system of pernicious principles* which they inculcate, had not the crisis which these, and similar productions, brought on, and the hold which I found they had taken on the people, and above all, the proofs I have since had occasion to attend to, of *a determined and continued resolution*, in this society, or some of its leaders, and adherents, *by all practicable means, to agitate and govern the popular mind**,—had not these circumstances, I say, awak-
ed

* Among these proofs I reckon the reprinting and republishing of some of the most exceptionable of their addresses,—particularly the summons to the Citizen Soldiers in more parts than one of the north. That to the nation, on the necessity of *Conventions*, published the 25th of January, and which contains so much of the precious essence of their principles, on penal law, levelling, popular interposition or insurrection (when the people has suffered too long)—the equality they *do* long for, the golden-age they *do* promise,—the insignificance, worthlessness, and conspiracies of the ranks and orders, &c. &c.—was sent for republication to Newry, *since the Dungannon Convention*. I do not know whether the Printer chose to proceed in it.—I allude also to attempts to calumniate and raise prejudices, *when necessary*, against the principles and “*civism*” of persons who surely have gone *far enough*, in opposition to government, but who unfortunately

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ed my particular attention, and convinced me that either the principles adopted and propagated by this society, must be exposed, or a great part of the people must be allowed to continue in wretched and dangerous delusion.

That our Constitution has considerable imperfections, and its administration, of course, considerable abuses, seems as certain as that thousands can see and feel the abuses, for one that can either trace their true causes, judge of a safe remedy,—or compare the imperfections and advantages, and determine the degree in which one or other of them predominates. The depression of our Catholics, as Catholics, and that of our whole People, as a People, began of late to appear to many Protestants to be the same; while, to some others, it appeared that a Reform alone would give to the people their due weight in the Constitution, but that the Reform was only to be had by the union of the whole people, which union,

nately have shewn some apprehension for the constitution and peace of the country. I reckon also among these proofs, the outcry raised against government for measures simply of *self-defence* and *resistance to anarchy*, as well as of national defence against “*external hostility*.”

again,

again, could only be had by making it an object to the Catholics to join in it. At all events, therefore, the removal of the Catholic penal laws seemed equally necessary, whether as a means or preparation for a Reform, or as in itself an ultimate object. It is a happy state of things where it is the *obvious interest* of man to do justice to his fellow-man. It saves a world of virtue ;—a quality which it is more proper to believe in than prudent to depend on, as the sole, or principal agent, in any great scheme of public good.

These arguments for Catholic emancipation, true as they were in themselves, and peculiarly impressed as they have been on the minds of many, ever since Ireland recovered an independent legislature, and since that legislature appeared to be not as truly *National*, as it was *not British*, seemed to come home to every sense and feeling, and to warm conviction into passion, when the astonishing revolutions which the world had lately exhibited, and which appeared only indeed *in a train*, were dwelt on for a moment by any ardent mind.

The bold and dazzling experiment of France raised and spread a flame of enthusiasm, which

nothing, perhaps, but the degeneracy of France herself into fanaticism and cruelty, could have repressed within the bounds of propriety or common-sense. Twenty-four millions, not of rude and unlettered barbarians, but of men formed and cultivated by their country, by their climate, and by the magnificent profusion and fastidious delicacy of despotism itself, to science, arts, taste and refinement;—men so high in all these that the world spoke their language, without being subject to their empire;—men who taught Britain herself to glory in her own Constitution* ;—and, after speculating, under the mask of lightness, on *liberty* as on *virtú*, had been led, by regal impolicy and national gallantry, to inhale her simple and sublime spirit in America;—*such a nation*, bursting in a moment the shackles of ages, and acquiring that *power* of self-government, which it seemed as inconceivable they should want the *ability*, as that any nation should want the *will*, to use, for *their own true happiness*;—this was a spectacle, which he who could behold without exultation at the new and immense career of happiness that seemed opening to the human race itself, must have been wise indeed in the know-

* Montesquieu in particular.

ledge of man, and chilled into caution by the severe philosophy of history, or he must have been shielded, in head and heart, by prejudices and passions the subjects of pity more than praise, or by honest and frequently self-pluming dullness, whose errors, if seldom fatal, are seldom generous.

To men neither of the first nor last of mortals —“ longing after” a *state of perfection*, yet not recollecting that immortality alone could reveal such a state;—to many such men, their honest and ardent wishes appeared the next thing to proofs;—it appeared not impossible, and soon, from the self-deceptions of imagination, half-probable, that the *experiments* yet made in the moral and political world. were as imperfect as many in the physical world;—that no *conclusion* could be drawn from what had been to what might be;—that *new discoveries* were equally to be expected in all the objects and departments of human knowledge; that if we could draw the thunder from the clouds, we might eradicate or prevent the birth of passion in man, or if we could soar above the clouds, from the properties of air, we might rise above human weakness from the general study and application of metaphysics; it appeared

peared, in fine, that when such a nation as France had *overturned tyranny*, they must necessarily, or as a matter of course, *establish liberty*;—that this liberty, for any thing we could tell, *might* be as new to the world as the means, or the agents of its accomplishment; that, in defiance of all that hitherto passed for wisdom and experience, we *might* now behold a more than golden-age,—a *moral and political millenium*. To the blessings of this new dispensation, enthusiasm could scarce permit herself to imagine bounds. War was to cease; the wolf to dwell with the lamb, and the infant to lead the young lion!

At a time when sentiments like these were far from uncommon among us;—I can almost vouch for their existence, for some of them are not very unlike what were my own;—at a time when many of us formed *wishes*, yet scarce knew *what* we, or what the world, should dare either to wish or expect, from the daily miracles that were displaying themselves,—it is not surprising that some among us turned their views upon this our little island, one of the prime favourites of nature, and on its gallant people, equal, I will say, to any on earth, if nature, capacity, and almost a superabundance of life were done justice to. Could
any

any man, could any of ourselves at least, born above brutes, or ranking above the vegetable, say, that this country, and this people, were *what they ought to be*,—what they *could remain*,—what it would not be ten thousand shameless iniquities to *allow* them to remain, even if our people—but that was impossible,—could be *contented* to be such as they were?

No!—this country, this people of ours (and I rejoice in being able to say so) *could not remain as they were*. Our Catholics had already begun to move.—Apprehensions, and a caution not discreditable, often most honourable and most necessary in political men of a certain degree of ostensible responsibility, who would serve their country, not shock opinions,—had, in the spring of ninety-one, prevented the humble petitions of these depressed men from making their way to our legislature.—Even old and steady friends were afraid to *agitate* the question. The nation, or the high political powers of it, were conceived *unripe*. Certain parties, either having or thought to have their use, might be broken, and the Catholics not served, nor the nation united. The Catholics resolved to renew their applications in the following sessions. The
resolution

resolution proved them men, and the opinion that they required but *adoption* to become brethren, began thence to gain more ground among the Protestants.—Belfast had the honour of leading the way.—The new faith underwent just so much opposition as to make it thrive.—In the autumn of ninety-one they formed the first society of United Irishmen, soon followed by that of Dublin, who, in right of her seat, endowments and dignity, assumed the politico-pontifical chair.

As I have stated the *abuses* of this last society, (the only one of which I recollect any publication, except the original declaration) and as I find myself obliged to say, that such abuses almost necessarily belong to its *too popular foundation*, and to its assumption of a political *lead*, with which this so popular foundation is radically incompatible, I owe it to justice, and to my own consistency, to defend the *first principles* on which these societies were formed, and which neither their misapplication nor perversion, neither the follies nor crimes of those who profess them, have yet determined me to retract or be ashamed of.

The name *United Irishmen* expresses their grand principle,—*Union among Irishmen*. Take from it the cloud thrown over it by the conduct of those who assumed it, and I conceive no name in this country higher, none of more patriotic devotion, none more expressive of the *state* and *necessities* of our country, or more consistent with all that is *due* to that nation with which we are connected through our common sovereign, or to that sovereign himself, who is the immediate bond of our connection. The principle expresses *the great necessity* that we should be A NATION, and use the only means,—*union in a national spirit*,—a national spirit in our people, producing a more perfectly national spirit in our legislature. It expresses the necessity of obliterating for ever, all save the mere historic and warning memory of the fact, that any part of our people had been a hostile colony, a foreign settlement, or a trading factory, paying to the country whence they came *subjection* for *support*, and cherishing against their adopted and now natural country, or, which is the same, against the native inhabitants,—*now their countrymen*,—a spirit of unextinguishable hostility, as an eternal principle of self-defence. It expresses the principle, that we should not vainly attempt to

arrest the efflux of time, nor impiously counteract the benevolent progress of nature,—that we should allow all wounds to close, nor attempt to give to Enmity the most mortal, naturally, as the most odious of human beings, a blasphemous and miserable immortality. It expresses the principle, that we should now, at length, when safely we may, become ONE PEOPLE ENJOYING ONE LAW,—from whence must flow, as a necessary consequence, *a legislature,—to every truly and comprehensively beneficial purpose,—national*,—a legislature sufficiently connected in spirit and interest with our people, and with the whole people; devoted, of course, to their interest, in the most enlarged and liberal sense, not to the petty and degrading monopolies of *any part of it*,—colonial or native, protestant or catholic, aristocratic or popular,—and, as little (I was going to say—still less) devoted to any *exclusive* or *prevalent* interest of our ally or confederate Britain,—with whom fate has connected us, and from whom we never can be separated, unless by something worse, if not more pitiable than madness, either of Britain herself, forcing us to believe our interest and opinions of interest, irreconcilable, or of our own people, thinking an equal confederacy *by law*, and a nearly equal confederacy *in fact*, not sufficient, and resolving to purchase

chase by the horrors and risks of civil war, the perhaps unhappy independence of a name.

The nation was to be *raised*,—as a nation ;—the people, *as the people*, were to be raised into greater consideration and consequence, and, of course, power. This could only be through a *popular spirit*, directed to what seemed the *only possible means*,—*union*, to obtain Catholic emancipation and reform. The enthusiasm of the times at once afforded the *opportunity*, and pointed out the *necessity of using it* ; shewed at once the good that might be done, and the danger of not attempting it.

While a flame of liberty,—no matter whether well or ill-understood,—was embracing the world, were our Irish Catholics alone of the human race, to catch no portion or particle of its lambent subtlety ? Were they *never* to remember that they also were men ? Having joined their Protestant brethren in demanding justice from Britain (for join us they *did*, and to their serious assistance alone,—if to any thing that *the people* did, we owe our success*;) were they so dull of nature, or so degraded,

* It has been said by some of our Protestant reformists, that we regained the independence of our legislature without

degraded, as never to recollect, never to apply to themselves, as Catholics, the example which
we

Catholic aid, and might without it gain a reform. Gentlemen forget the almost disgraceful failures of two Conventions, aiming at a reform *merely* Protestant; the only one that then, perhaps, could appear *practicable*. They forget also that the Volunteers of our *Olympiad* (may I call it) of *eighty-two* were, in some parts of the country, necessarily *Catholic*, the Protestants who could bear the expence of the associations being there comparatively few. But they forget a fact of chief prominence in our historical tablet, which few of our active Catholics of the day have themselves much attended to, I imagine;—that the Catholic body, however silent or apparently inactive, were rendered *powerful supporters* in the revolution of *eighty-two*, by their *adoption* (let me name it) at the first Dungannon Convention. “The *sacred right* of private judgment in matters of religion,” was there, *for the first time*, declared by a body of the Protestant *people*, and the relaxation of the penal laws against Catholics rejoiced in,—“as a “measure *fraught with the happiest consequences* to the UNION “and PROSPERITY of the inhabitants of Ireland.” These *first seminal principles of national union and toleration* being thus spread, from a sort of authority, throughout the kingdom, were instantly and so warmly returned and vivified by declarations from every quarter, that it became evident we, at last, *understood*, and *were determined to cultivate*, the *only*, and *finally irresistible* means of national emancipation. The hint was equally understood among ourselves and in England. We immediately had “an Irish Brigade,” consisting, professedly, of Catholics as well

we all gloried in as Irishmen? Were they never to dream of saying to us—"We gained you
"liberty.

as Protestants, and our legislative independence was wisely and liberally acknowledged by Great Britain.

Having had the honour of proposing those declaratory resolutions at Dungannon, I hope I may be allowed to add a few words explaining the history of the fact, and shewing its connection with our late Catholic revolution. I had so drawn the intended proposition for Dungannon, as that it declared (I think I recollect almost the very words, and believe I have the sketch itself somewhere by me)—that "We anticipated
"in imagination *that glorious, happy, and, we trusted, not*
"distant era, when, in consequence of the gradual operation
"of these relaxations of the penal laws, *all our countrymen,*
"of whatever religious persuasion, would have an equal in-
"terest in, and *equally enjoy,* the laws, constitution, and li-
"berty of their country." But this sentiment, and the consummating views it opened, were too bold for the infant liberality and unripe comprehension of the times; and in consequence of consultations and arguments before the meeting, I found myself obliged to submit to its amputation;—for such, in its worst sense, I considered the surrender. I even thought it *necessary*,—in order to carry a measure, in which I should have considered a failure as the death-blow of our emancipation,—to use arguments at the meeting addressed to those who were likely to be moved only by the most *narrow and illiberal policy*. In doing so, I sacrificed more *personal character* than I was aware of; for I thought *my own private*
sentiments

“ liberty. Our *name*, if not our arms, restored
 “ to *you* a Constitution, which, had we been
 “ supposed

sentiments were too well known to many of the Delegates, and had been otherwise too well proved, to be misconceived. However, if I required consolation, I received it from the information afterwards given me, that, with some Delegates, the *only* convincing arguments had been those addressed to *policy and illiberality*, and that but for these, they would have opposed the measure.—Such is man, and we must take him as we find him !

To give greater force to the measure, and a stronger *lesson* to all our sects and descriptions of men, I chose for seconder of the motion my friend Mr. Black, now dissenting minister of Derry (whose principles I had long known, and have since farther proved ;)—a resolution which obliged me to decline the favour of being seconded by Mr. Harvey of the county of Donegall, a gentleman of handsome fortune, and a clergyman of the established church, who applied to me for leave to second the motion, and was so liberal as to be satisfied with my reason for preferring Mr. Black,—“ that I
 “ wished the motion seconded rather by a *Presbyterian minister* ;—that sect being universally believed *most hostile to the*
 “ *Catholics.*”

Here then appears, not faintly or obscurely shadowed, but clearly and strongly sketched, the *great outline and principles* of Irish and Catholic emancipation, of which all that has since been written and done is, perhaps, but the illustration, finishing, or execution.

Among

“ supposed *hostile* or *neutral*, you never could
 “ have either regained or deserv'd. Shall we
 “ never

Among those publications which have most successfully illustrated this plan of national union, by far the first, as well as the earliest, seem to me to be those of my relation Mr. Jones, on whose particular merits in respect to the Catholics, a spirit so much resembling detraction has *lately*, I find, appeared, that it has induced me to reconsider them a little; and, somewhat interested as I may appear in the question, I cannot help saying, that if the decided, and bold, and enthusiastic assertion of the ancient merits and honour, and of the present rights of Catholics, and of the safety, and expediency, and even necessity of restoring these rights,—if the Protestants wished for a reform,—if they wished us “ confirmed a kingdom, and not a colony,”—if the *able* assertion of these principles, even at a time when the advocate of the Catholics seemed, to so many of his Protestant countrymen, almost a visionary, be *merit*,—the testimonies to Mr. Jones, from the Catholics, should be *the most honourable* that they have to bestow on any man of their country.

Before I conclude this long note, let me, as a farewell to the subject, observe, that though I am happy to see the Catholics obtain liberty *by any means not occasioning a commotion*, yet I regret that the means found necessary to be used, reflect but little honour on the legislature, and have had consequences, the danger of which may not yet be entirely removed. I regret that *Parliament* did not take up the business *in time*. They might *then* have given the Catholics *all civil liberty*

“ *never* partake of, never enjoy that Constitution which we thus restored?” If such demands of our Catholics should be neither anticipated nor yielded to,—*what*, if the enthusiasm of the times continued,—*what might* or rather *must* be, the consequence?—Either *emigration*, to find a

liberty on the instant,—and such a portion, and earnest, and assurance of a speedy and full participation of *political power*, as would, *before this day*, have made the country more flourishing, at least, and happy,—would have prevented all possible danger to its peace or constitution, and probably have made its transition at this time into *perfect liberty*, a matter as much of course and as safe, as any of the ordinary bills of the session. This was my idea in eighty-four, and every thing that has since passed, has given me but more reason to be confirmed in it.—I do not pretend to say, that conceding *the whole* in eighty-four, would have been really dangerous,—far less, that doing so now would not be the soundest national policy. I think it would be such. I have already repeatedly declared so. I only mean to say, that granting *almost* the whole at that time,—granting all, except such a *degree* of *political power* as, it might rationally be feared, would occasion a *revolution or transfer of power*, or a violent and dangerous contest for *superiority*,—would have been clearly safe, and therefore the best national policy;—and that granting *nothing* from that hour to this,—not even after the revolutions of the times announced the necessity, has brought this country into a situation from whence it is happy if it be soon relieved,—has spread suspicions and discontent, and given arms to turbulence, if not to treason.

country,—

country,—a measure which no morality could censure,—or the attempt, by *triumph at home*, to *recover* or *make* a country,—the lawfulness of which would be proved by the triumph itself, or the unlawfulness, by the renewal of scenes not even to be remembered, and by the practical execution of penalties scarce admitting aggravation in their theory. *Could* the war of eighty-two so soon be forgotten,—how we armed in silence, and conquered by words? Was no preparation ever likely to be made for *a moment* that might enable rights to be taken which would not be restored? Could we be certain that such a moment was beyond the power of time or chance to bring?—Could any man say, that the Catholics (were all other redress denied) would not be justified, nay called on, with all their power and address, to *prepare* for and *hasten* such a moment? Could any man say, that it was right, that it would not be madness, to make “*insurrection*” seem “*a sacred duty*” in Catholics, and to make it seem doubtful, whether *opposition* to such insurgents would in our Protestants be a duty or a crime? And if the moment should ever arrive, when, by the sword or the fear of the sword, our Catholics could *dictate*,—if the *natural* should ever thus become the *political* power of the country,—who

is the man, what body of men, would answer for a wise, and peaceable, and moderate, and magnanimous use of superiority so gained?—Who *then* would answer for a christian or god-like forgiveness of injuries, real or supposed?—Who, that there would exist no spirit of retaliation or revenge, no desire of indemnifying for past losses, or of plunder, under the name of indemnity or penalty or security?—Who then would answer for the consequences to the Constitution, or the peace of the country?—Who for the *state*—who for the *church*—who for even the *toleration of protestantism*,—when the multitude held the sword, and even leaders might be but the instruments of a mob?—Who, at least, would answer for that honour and dignity of the legislature which should never, if possible, be exposed to stain or compromise, nor appear to concede to power, not justice; which should *grant*—in time, and from good-will, and as entitled to gratitude,—not *surrender*—in humiliation, and from fear, and exciting a contempt only less destructive than continued obstinacy or injustice?—Who would be the wise men that would guarantee against all these dangers; or who the wiser men that would trust their forward guarantee?—There was *but one way*, let us agree, were there

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ten thousand out of which to chuse,—*there was but one way which could be safe.* It was, that the people should unite to *do*, at least, if not to *obtain justice*,—to restore, improve, and confirm freedom;—that they should unite to *cultivate* a deep and habitual sense of common interest, and to demand *the indissoluble union of equal laws.* This general sense of common interest and general resolution to promote and procure its establishment, could have been cultivated in perhaps but one way;—by societies at once political and social, bringing as it were within the sphere of sympathetic attraction, those between whom the laws had placed a great gulph, and binding them together by such great objects as the different associating interests must, from their peculiar political opinions and necessities, have each most at heart;—in short, by societies of United Irishmen,—a name of such native and essential meaning as nothing could have blasted, except a folly and intemperance astonishing, if any thing in folly or intemperance could astonish.

It may be said, that all these abuses of such institutions should have been foreseen.—That no better could have been expected from societies

that either set out, or were so likely soon to become a mob, and, as such, so dangerous possibly to the peace of the country, or so destructive to the very cause they would serve.—That such societies should either not have been formed, or their errors should have been more guarded against. That popular societies, like the people itself, are a dangerous instrument of good. If heavy and sluggish and inert, they are difficult to move; but once moved, acquire a momentum not at all to be resisted, nor ever, at the precise moment of propriety, to be stopped. If lively and active and passionate, the hurricane itself is not more deceitful, nor its track and sweep of destruction less to be calculated or foreseen. That where men can be secure neither of their associates nor their instruments, nor of the use to which they themselves may be put as either associates or instruments, they should not act at all, or should use so much caution, that it must be the next thing to inaction.

That these objections have but too much foundation, (for I cannot accede to them in their extent, nor think them applicable strictly to all circumstances and all times) the example of France, and what has happened even here, has
since

since proved. When these societies, however, were formed, the French experiment had but little developed itself,—had been considered at least with little coolness; and the pitch of extravagance to which our mother society of Dublin has soared, could not easily have been foreseen by those who imputed to its leaders even a moderate share of common sense, or supposed them possessed of any political principle not terminating in anarchy.

These societies required, I have observed, in some of them at least, a very popular base, in order to cultivate popular union and a national spirit. It was not immediately observed, but the event seems to have proved that this very popular nature,—which was absolutely necessary perhaps for their first, immediate, and *preparatory* purpose of *national union*,—disqualified them in the very same degree, for the higher purposes which seemed to follow of course the other, but which require powers of quite a different order,—those of leading in the detail, depths and delicacies, or of pointing out, distinctly and particularly, the chief political *objects* of this national union, when accomplished, and the *means*, at least the best and most practicable means, of attaining these

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objects.

objects. Such popular societies,—in order to be *even safe* in attempting any thing above the diffusion of the simplest, and most incontrovertible, and most plainly applicable principles,—should be *qualified* by the infusion of a spirit not strictly popular, but scientific and philosophic,—by the intermixture of not merely a few, but a pretty numerous *body of members* of such political information ability and integrity, as would be equally above seducing or yielding to the ignorance, indiscretion, or violence of *the many*.—Now, such an infusion of science, philosophy, ability and integrity, or at least the *continued predominance* of such a spirit in so very popular a body, must, *if it pretend to lead*, as our United Irishmen do, be next to a miracle. The aristocratic * part, I will call it, and the democratic would probably, before long, be an equal annoyance to each other; and if there happened to exist in the society a few would-be dicta-

* I hope there is no offence in calling that the *aristocratic* part, in which the *wisdom* of a popular society resides.—It certainly answers as well to the etymology of the word; and those who think an aristocracy, in perhaps every sense, a foolish thing, cannot take it ill, that the name is *not* applied to the *majority* of any democratic body.

tors or a single one, the duty of the intelligent and honest part of the society would soon, it is probable, be made as disagreeable to the individual as useless to the public. To keep demagogues from mischief or the multitude from folly, is a serious occupation. The cave of Æolus, however occasionally to be *visited*, by a Juno from a love of empire or revenge, or by a Ulysses from an ardent passion for his country, would require more than the *sceptre* of an Æolus to make it an endurable dwelling, or scene of action, to a lover of peace, philosophy, or the muses*.

To remedy, in part, these palpable deficiencies in the city society, an attempt was made some considerable time ago to form another society, agreeing in the great principles of Catholic

* ————— Hic vasto rex Æolus antro
 Lucentes ventos, tempestatesque sonoras
 Imperio premit, ac vinclis & carcere frenat.
 Illi indignantes,—*magno cum murmure montis*,—
 Circum claustra fremunt. Celsa sedet Æolus arce,
 Sceptra tenens,—*mollitque animos, & temperat iras*.—
Ni faciat, maria ac terras, calumque profundum
Quippe ferant rapidi secum, verrantque per auras.—

ÆNEID.

Emancipation

Emancipation and Reform, but including persons who might differ in certain *degrees* of those principles, or perhaps as to some of the means of carrying them into effect. The name of United Irishmen having been even then discredited, it was to have been sacrificed; yet did some gentlemen of ability, integrity and moderation, fear the consequences of entering into a society even thus guarded. The caution of those gentlemen may have been no more than necessary.—The general reasons for such caution have before been touched on. Their motives for it were undoubtedly good;—but, by declining to take any part in this *sub-political* field, they left it in the full possession of the intemperate and incapable, whom the institution of more guarded societies might have checked and kept in order, if it could not reform them.

Nor is this the only instance in which it is doubtful whether extreme caution has not proved extreme imprudence. For, near two years ago, in the summer recess of ninety-one, and before there was in the kingdom a single society of United Irishmen, I myself, as an act of public and private duty, gave a number of the first men in the kingdom *notice* of some facts with

with which I had been made acquainted, and which it were to be wished they had thought worthy their attention in the last session of parliament.—The facts to which I claimed the attention of these gentlemen were these ;—that the Catholics having been unsuccessful in attempts to get a petition presented to Parliament in the preceding session, did intend to renew their application in the following one—“ That *I had* “ *strong reasons to believe* that a number of Protestants, persons of some weight in the North, “ had taken up the idea of declaring in their favour, and should the Catholics, or the Protestants who might support them, require assistance, there were, *even to my knowledge*, “ men of literary talents in this town, and “ through the kingdom, who would devote “ themselves to a principle that restored liberty “ and union to the people.” I went farther ; I warned these gentlemen against the effects of “ the late revolutions which seemed extending “ themselves, *in preparation at least*, round the “ habitable globe ;—that whether thence, and “ from the theories of government which had “ gone forth, the rights of citizens and men “ were better understood, or only supposed so “ to be, this effect *must* equally follow,—that *all*

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power,—

“ power,—all power—must shortly either moderate
 “ itself, or be over-turned. The consequence of
 “ this latter circumstance, who, I asked, shall
 “ tell? The very *risking* of it might be a game
 “ suiting desperate fortunes or desperate princi-
 “ ples; but if *the powers that are*, or if *the gen-*
 “ *tlemen I addressed*, engaged voluntarily in such
 “ deep play, they would do the very thing which
 “ men so desperate would wish them to do. They
 “ wagered against infinite odds. They would
 “ act more prudently to “ *discern the times.*”

Here was a new sort of conspiracy,—announc-
 ed and justified by, it should seem, one of the
 conspirators themselves,—to a number of the very
 persons conspired against,—and who were told
 how they could not only secure themselves against
 the treason, but turn it into triumph. If I ad-
 vised the admission of my countrymen, the ene-
 my, within the walls of the Constitution, I did
 not conceal them, it must be owned, in a wooden
 horse, nor did I affect to have quarrelled with them,
 or any of their “ Inventors of wickedness.”
 Perhaps it might be for this reason among others,
 which might seem a sort of *plebeianism* of principle,
 that I had less credit with those of the Patrician
 Order. The fear of being betrayed into any
 thing

Normandy," or to accept a consignment of *leaders*, by land-carriage from College-green.—They were told, some of them,—(I recollect the time,—tis a good while ago;) that if they would have no *great* leaders, they might happen to get a few *little* ones, and gain but moderately by the change.—It did not signify;—they would have no leaders. What had the nation to do but *go abreast*?—They all know their business,—and their men. "*Instinct*, says Falstaff, is a *great matter*." The lion knows "the true Prince,"—and the people *the true Constitution*. They have then no occasion to *think*;—they have only to *go on*. And if any little mound inclosure or impediment, such as a law, or a principle of political prudence, or of universal justice, or of commonsense, or an array of national property character and integrity (supported peradventure by something more than the national standing army) should meet them on the way—they have only to *go on still*,—only to act first and think afterwards,—to get over the mound if they can, if not, down with it as a nuisance, and dance, or build a Babel on its ruins. When the thing is *done*, they will find out or be told, whether it is *well done* or not;—and when the confusion of tongues comes,—why, then they will all understand one another.

ther. Happy,—could we but find out the happiness,—happy state of things, where no man is led, yet all are leaders ;—where no man follows, yet somebody or other still goes foremost ;—where no man “ trusts friend or enemy,” yet still some friend or enemy is employed ;—where every man judges and acts in every thing,—and every man for himself, no man in the least degree for his neighbour, yet ever and anon some good-natured and active and disinterested citizen or other, “ instinct” no doubt with the purest patriotism and with love of every human being but himself,—supplies *impartially*, from his mighty stores of observation and reflection,—the facts, the fictions, the inuendos, the principles, and all the good and complicated materials, on which this omniscient good judge, and omnipotent good brother-citizen judges and acts,—pulls down and builds up, makes and unmakes, creates and regenerates, faves and damns, *all that comes before him*,—constitutions and characters, kingdoms, empires, republics themselves, worlds of matter, and worlds of spirit !

“ Oh but (our gentlemen will say) we dont mean, literally, that we are to have *no* leaders, we only mean that we are to have none but
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from among ourselves;—in short we shall be our own leaders!—We know *ourselves* to be honest,—we are sure we have understanding—and the subject, besides, is the simplest on earth.—Any infant could form a House of Commons! What has he to do but make it *perfectly* pure, *perfectly* unmixed, and *perfectly* unconnected with and uninfluenced by either of the other two branches of the legislature,—chosen freely, that it may be a *fair emanation*, and for the shortest possible term, that it may be *sufficiently under the controul* of the people;—in short, that it may be *their express image*, and breathing *solely* their living spirit,—and the business is done.—To do this, or to foresee its safe and sovereign efficacy as a reform, requires no *deep knowledge of any kind*,—no *ability* almost—but simply *a little common-sense and common honesty*;—and they who would persuade us otherwise may have much of the two or three first of these qualities, but we must be excused from attributing to them any extraordinary portion of the last!”

I shall not at present stop to shew, as I think I easily could, and as perhaps some time hence, should it appear likely to be useful, I may attempt to do,—that the ideas which the people generally entertain

entertain of our Constitution are, in some material respects, grossly false and unfounded ;—that in particular, the opinions just mentioned, and others perhaps which seem to be at least insinuated by several of our late resolutions from Dungannon, are such. I shall only give a few arguments to prove that, *from the very nature of the subject*, the principles and perfection of our Constitution, or in short of any form of government, *cannot possibly* be so simple and intelligible to every man of whatever capacity or knowledge ;—and I shall then mention a few *facts*, which seem to prove *experimentally*, that a little more modesty in the arduous task of conducting a great national emancipation and reform would not have been quite unbecoming the gentlemen whose arguments I am answering, nor perfectly a matter of indifference to the country to which they have presumed to give law.

A form of government is simply an invention,—or an institution, the mixed produce of accident and invention,—to keep in order and direct to the greatest attainable good, and to secure, as far as practicable, from evil, *a multitude* of those complicated and wonderful beings, men,—beings various almost to infinity, yet alike almost to a miracle ;—

miracle;—gifted by nature with all the possible degrees and combinations, of (we might almost venture to say) all the possible powers, dispositions and qualities of body and mind,—external and internal perception, reason, imagination, affections, passions, appetites, instincts, &c.—and these altered and modified, in a thousand different ways, by the circumstances in which they are placed, the country, climate, times, accidents at home, accidents from abroad, and the habits which the assemblage of all these have given birth to, matured, or confirmed.

That a *single* complicated machine (I shall call it) of this kind should be understood in all its parts by any man living, or even in many of its parts, by one out of a hundred of those who pass for men themselves, “because God made them,” and they walk upon two, and go through the ordinary functions of life better belike than most of our politicians and philosophers, is just about as *probable* as that the mill-horse should understand the whole machinery which, blind or blind-folded, he contributes to move, or that a mite, having traversed or eat its cheese, should describe the proportions and uses of the universe.—If to *order and direct well*, and to *pre-*

pare for self-direction, a *single* human being requires knowledge, powers, perseverance, and a benevolent integrity far above common,—*who is he* that is fit to lay down, or in many respects to judge of, even small *parts* of a plan that is to govern a *multitude* of such beings?—Which of us, not having studied or practised any mechanical art or occupation, pretends to work at it?—To construct an Orrery,—to proportion the powers and regulate the movements of a watch?—To explore the depths of chemistry, or to apply this chemistry to medicine, to agriculture, or to our manufactures, &c.?—Which of us pretends to surgery without having attended dissections, or cures the diseases of the body without knowing what the body is? Is the mechanism, the science of *mind*, or of *man*, an object of less study or difficulty, than the properties of inanimate matter, or the separate parts of the animal body?—Should we not know the *materials* of this delicate machine, *a people*, their forms, magnitude and capacities, before we attempt to put them together, or to judge of them when put together?—If the machine appear out of order, should we not be acquainted with its *true theory*, with the *use* and *connection* of all its parts, before we pretend to find out the seat, the cause, or the cure of the

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disorder?

disorder?—What should we say of the unhappy clown, who after gaping about a while in a mill or a steam-engine, should take offence at the dirty oil that lessened the friction in one part, the flow of water which prevented its taking fire in another, or, seized with a spirit of practical criticism, should creep into a corner of the machinery, and pulling away some *check, stay, or regulator*,—useless in his mind, or a clog on the work, —should set all in a thundering commotion about his ears?—His amazements and mischances in the experiment, if not too serious, might furnish some not uninstruative buffoonery for a pantomime.—How he might be buffeted by this arm or that of the machine,—be started from a spring-board and meet a splinter, be caught up and tattered by this flyer, and landed a *sans-culotte* into that hopper, —be borne round or aloft on this or that wheel, and escape, by miracle, at length, soufed into a boiler or shot through a window into the water-course!—This might be sport, if a few candle-snuffers were ready to catch our hero in a good blanket. Not so perhaps the rash tampering with *a constitution*. The removal of a part, to vulgar apprehension insignificant or injurious, may have such consequences to the whole machine, that he who brings not to the task of reform something
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of diffidence if not awe on his mind, is either little to be trusted or utterly unfit for the task,—He has not knowledge enough to know his own ignorance, or he has not integrity enough to be cautious of doing mischief.—When therefore we hear of gentlemen who will not venture to be their own mill-wrights or watch-makers, their own surgeons or physicians, attornies or lawyers,—assert that nothing is so easy and proper as that they, and all other good folk, should be their own and the nations *legislators* or *constitution-formers*,—should undertake an office that requires more deep knowledge, more sublime ability and genius than perhaps all the arts and all the sciences taken together,—we are tempted either to smile at their simplicity and inconsistency, or to think they value the Constitution, in their hearts, much less than they do a very little of their health, trade, or property. They will knowingly trust no quack with any of the latter—but they would themselves bleed and physic, carve and tooth-draw the Constitution, with as much simplicity, or as little remorse, as a Doctor Laet, a Sangrado, or his footman Gil Blas,

If there be no subject then in which the people can act without leaders,—if the subject of

reform be that which, of all others, the people at large are least capable of understanding thoroughly, even through their leaders,—the great question is,—*who* are the leaders in whom they should confide?

The choice depends on *the species of reform aimed at*. The people will judge of the leaders most likely to answer their own purposes, and we shall judge of their *purposes* by the *leaders* they finally chuse. If they will continue to be their own leaders, or will chuse, and confide in as such, none but men of their own order, in either rank or spirit,—men ambitious to lead, or condescending to flatter them,—(and such men possess commonly little principle, if they have capacity, and little capacity, if they have principle)—we must conclude,—either that they know not what they do, or know too well what they are doing;—that they either have no rational conception what would be reform,—in which case the true and well-judging friends of reform will doubt whether they should *join* or *oppose* them,—or that they aim not at reform but a revolution,—in which case hesitation must cease,—all who wish to preserve peace and the constitution must oppose them as they

they would do an avowed enemy or an invader*.

If

* Of the use likely to be made of a popular, or what would be styled a true and radical reform, a thousand passages, in chiefly the Northern news-papers, sufficiently shew.

The anonymous writer of "*Thoughts on the British Constitution*," published lately in the Belfast News-letter, with it should seem a real intention of bringing the people back to the Constitution,—after mentioning that our Bishops having seats among the Lords "*certainly serves neither civil nor religious liberty*,"—observes, that "though some improvement may be made on this point, he conceives that as spiritual barons, the Bishops *would not weigh a grain in the scale* against a House of Commons *really returned by and clothed with ALL THE MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE*."—I am not one of those accustomed to "deem with *mysterious reverence*" of my Lords the Bishops; nor yet do I look on them as so many Antichrists, or ministers of Belial or of the lady of Babylon; but observing *the spirit of the times*, and the lengths to which the following up of theories may carry people, and how *possible* it is that "the majesty of the people," once upon its legs and in motion, might *carry away* all theories and authors of theories,—and after having made the scale of the bishops kick the beam, might lighten his other majesty (the king) and the temporal barons too, and I don't know whom else, of all the incumbrance of legislative and political power,—I for myself only, and those other humble politicians
who

If we leave the discussion of principles and their argumentative consequences, and appeal to

who cannot see every thing at the first glance, must beg a little time to think, and to improve my acquaintance with "*the king-people*," before I consent to assist at their coronation, either as a priest of the holy popular oil, or as *grand carver* of the Constitution, or in any other capacity, even as a news or a link-boy. As a specimen of the condescension, modesty, benevolence, and dignity with which the king-people would address their loving and no doubt loyal subjects of all descriptions, take a proclamation from *the Maghera Volunteers*,—or "NATIONAL GUARDS," who, "*Eighty-four on parade*, December 21st, 1792, announce to THE WORLD their political principles—in order to *confound envy*, silence the babblings of jealousy, *illumine ignorance*, and *inspire PUBLIC CONFIDENCE*." They proceed, with all the ability which the preamble promises, to "declare *explicitly*, before God "and *their fellow-men*," several laudable feelings and propensities of theirs, among which is not forgotten their *reverence to themselves*,—then their pride in "a *limited monarchy*,—viz. the King, by just prerogative, *first magistrate of the executive department*,—an hereditary peerage ONLY—(they will have nothing to do with the Bishops) and a COMMONS-HOUSE—FEELING ITS SOVEREIGNTY, as *the delegated body of THE PEOPLE*, *speaking the voice and THUNDERING THE MANDATES of THE NATION*." They next "execrate the wild and indefensible levelling idea of—equality in *property*, but glory in *that dear equality* by which intrinsic worth and sterling merit ALONE exalt their genuine votaries to

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to *facts*, or *experiments*,—under which sort of leaders has our country of late gained most,—or, has it been most successful in the system of *leaders*, or of *no leaders*, we shall, I think, easily determine the question.

“ the first offices of public confidence interest and honour
 “ in the nation.” They then *declare* the MOMENT when
 public resistance is public virtue,—a moment which their
 description and sentiments, compared together, announce
 pretty significantly as *already arrived* ;—they declare for “ an
 “ *exclusive power* of the people in the Commons-house,”—
 denounce as “ a vehicle of temporizing policy” a news-paper
 which, it seems, publishes at times some different opinions,
 &c. on *these clear principles* of reform ;—“ denounce all
 “ pensioned hirelings, &c.—and declare they will not be
 “ deterred from their duty, UNTIL their country shall *taste*
 “ the sweets of FREEDOM, and *pluck the fruit luxuriant from*
 “ THE TREE OF LIBERTY.” They declare “ they will assist
 “ the legal magistrate in the DUE execution of the *good laws*
 “ of the land, against every violater of order and JUST go-
 “ vernment,”—with some other things, to be published in a
 paper *not* denounced. These *Maghera-men*, it appears, are
 for A LIMITED KING *at the head of* A SOVEREIGN DEMOCRA-
 CY,—just as their *fellow-men*, our United Irishmen, would
 die for *the Constitution*, and be cut to pieces for “ *natural*
right WITHOUT COMPROMISE.”—*Et tu vitula dignus & hic !*
 —Such is the emulation, and so equal is the merit, of all our
 choice spirits in town or village.—Every Colin-clout is an
 Apollo, and every Apollo a Colin-clout.—*Mens omnibus*
una !

Under *parliamentary leaders* it gained (I will even say, without risk of commotion) the Octennial Bill,—the cradle of our restored Constitution and People ;—the first relaxation of the popery laws, the origin and ground-work of those which have succeeded ;—the emancipation of our legislature from three extrinsic powers, a foreign parliament, two privy councils, and the English attorney general ;—the restoration of the final judicature,—in other words, of legislative and political manhood to our lords, and of private justice in the last resort, to the middle and lower orders of the community ;—the ordinary great judges of the land, the first depositaries and distributors of justice and protection, rendered independent of the crown ;—the liberty of the subject protected by the adoption of the British *Habeas-corpus* act ;—laws to create agriculture and manufactures, to open, I was going to say to *expand* the interior of the country by canals, to give the people at large their *only* means of happiness, *productive and protected industry* ;—laws these (with many others perhaps on the same scale that I overlook at the moment) which have made it even necessary to the consequence of our gentry that they should live and spend their fortunes at home,—and the effects of
which

which,—(notwithstanding all that must be confessed wanting to make the system *perfect*,) are seen in the face of the country, so improved and enriched of late, as to afford but slender proof of either an enslaved people or degenerating Constitution;—and lastly, a degree of *personal liberty*, known only to those countries that enjoy the same or a similar Constitution, and which might be called *perfect licentiousness*, if we looked only to what has been so long borne by our legislature and government from men whose present enjoyment even of their lives*, I was going to

* It is not meant to be insinuated here, that any of the persons alluded to have forfeited their lives *by the laws of this country*; but merely, that it is an extraordinary proof of the *mildness* as well as *powerful protection* of our laws, that many of these gentlemen are either *alive* or *at large*. There is not a single public, or perhaps private assertion, of certain opinions concerning the *slavery* of this country, which is not confuted by the assertion itself. The assertors, bold as they no doubt are, would no more *dare* to make them in an enslaved country,—in a country of *bastiles, fortresses, lieutenants of police, alguazils, janissaries, bow-strings, inquisitions, informers, lion's mouths*, &c. &c. than they would to take a lion himself by the beard. They are not quite so mad neither. The ignorance of many of them of the state of liberty in most other countries, and their familiarity with their own *almost total freedom from restraint*, make them as insensible of their liber-

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ty,

to say, is a proof that our Constitution has in it such native inherent stability vigour and excellence, that it is *enabled* to be what a bad government never can be,—forbearing, merciful and magnanimous.

Such things, if I mistake not,—and if I do, let me be corrected,—we have gained through leaders, and parliamentary leaders. Such things were, the other day, enjoyed, in this land of slaves. If it be a land of slaves, it is happy perhaps that we have never yet enjoyed a land of freedom. I fear it would be too much a paradise, and that it would be more than all our preachers, religious as well as political, could then do, to bring us to believe and act as if there was still a better world.

But what have we gained by our no-leaders? This :—*that it is at this moment perhaps uncertain,*

ty, as they are of the motion of their blood.—Mr. Simon Brown, in his dedication to Queen Caroline of perhaps the best answer to Tindal on Christianity, assured her majesty, in melancholy seriousness, that God had deprived him of his *thinking soul*. These gentlemen go about all the market-places telling people they are deprived of *the use of their tongues*, and prove they are *fettered* and *hand-cuffed*, by knocking down every man who denies it. They seem as mad as poor Mr. Brown,—but, alas, without his knowledge or ability!

whether

whether all we have gained and all we have been lately gaining, by incorporating ourselves as a people,
—IS NOT LOST.

We have *gained* such a spirit of discontent through the country, and in many parts such a spirit of disobedience to the law, of idleness, rapine and disorder, that nothing but a general reformation of sentiment, or the rigour of legal and military execution, can quell them. We have gained such an idea of French liberty and equality,—or popular improvements, say, upon these—disperfed among our people, that, it should seem, multitudes of them want but a watchword, or a little more encouragement and power,—no matter from what quarter,—to change their old mode of living by industry, and by the employment derived from the great, the rich, the commercial, and the manufacturing, into the newer and shorter mode of living more in less time, though by it the sources of after life should be exhausted—living on the rich and great while the plunder should last, and committing every excess that can appear necessary to procure maintain or justify the privilege.—We have gained the destruction of credit in every line, no man knowing what the next mo-

ment may produce, and every man therefore providing in some sort against the worst*. We have gained of course, an almost total stagnation of trade, manufactures, public works, and private industry, and a dearth of the necessities of life in the capital, the consequence of unusual difficulty and danger in transporting them from the country, or of a scarcity, the natural effect of popular dissipation and idleness. We have gained the destruction of our Volunteer Institution, late the pride of the country.—We have gained an increased military establishment, and the expence, without perhaps the benefit of a militia.—We have gained the gun-powder and treasonable correspondence bill,—confessed unfit, either of them, for ordinary times, but which in these times, I fear, no man, a friend to the people themselves, could have opposed.—We have gained, in at least some parts of the kingdom, a sort of military government,—necessary, I do be-

* Though the destruction of credit, and stagnation of trade are not owing *entirely* to the general idea of insecurity in this country, from the state of the popular mind, yet that they are *very much*, or in the *degree* at least in which they subsist, owing to it, I do believe. The failure of credit began here long before it did in England. Yet I have heard these things all accounted for from the *French war*!

lieve, to maintain the peace of the country, but betraying a lamentable fact, that such a government is necessary.—These things have we gained—by leaders of the order of our Dublin United Irishmen and their faithful not humble followers; by men who profess to see in our Constitution, scarce a perfection but one, that, in their opinion, it *legalizes* its own destruction by insurrection;—men who tell the nation—yes—they do tell us,—from the Delphic Temple of their Town-house, themselves all foaming with consciousness of the inspiring God,—that the time for this insurrection is *already come*,—UNLESS government should capitulate at discretion;—that “ after
 “ all they (the men of Belfast) have heard, and
 “ read, (and thought, no doubt) about our *glorious* and *happy* Constitution, they (even they)
 “ are *so ignorant* as not to be able to find *what*
 “ *it is* ;—that they do not hesitate to say—(in large characters) WE ARE A NATION OF SLAVES!”
 —men who will say no more for even our theoretical Constitution, according to their own false yet most popular description of its theory,—“ a
 “ government by King, Lords and Commons,—
 “ the Commons being a REAL representation of
 “ ALL the people,”—than that it is “ a government, which, IF ATTAINABLE WITHOUT VIO-
 “ LENCE

“ LENCE, they *wish for and prefer;*” but, if OBLIGED to *use violence*,—which they pretty plainly say they *will use*, if “*pertinaciously opposed,*” —why then—it seems as clear as their own good understanding and never-failing common-sense,—that they will *neither prefer nor be content with* this Constitution of ours, “*glorious and happy*” as our dotards and dunces may esteem it*;—men, the

* On an amendment moved by Mr. Holmes to *expunge* the sentiment above-mentioned from the address of Belfast Town-meeting,—that they preferred *a certain reform* of our Constitution, “*if attainable without violence, &c.*” a gentleman, whose opinion there should be expected to go for something, is represented in their news-papers as having professed *for himself* opinions directly and unqualifiedly republican, and to have besides observed, that “*as no security could be given*” “*that a reform would not be denied, it was but FAIR to speak*” “*out their minds at once.*” They spoke but hypothetically, “*and only said they should prefer a government by King,*” “*Lords and Commons, were that Commons to be the true*” “*and real representatives of the people, rather than have recourse to violence, though they might esteem another form of*” “*government more perfect.*” The meeting rejected the proposed amendment after hearing such language as this, which should seem an additional reason for adopting it. Yet the most forward of these Belfast patriots are now, it is said, the most shocked by the imputation of republicanism, and the most exasperated against government for sending them an army, and the most out of humour with the Constitution which

the collected spirit, the general and almost unvaried words indeed, of whose *denunciations* against government are no less than these, “ drive not us the people to *extremities* : ” — a reform we will have : —
 “ to attain it WE SHALL THINK NO SACRIFICE

which puts it in the *power* of government to treat them so ;
 — “ with many holyday and lady terms ! ”

I know there are many respectable inhabitants of that town who have not been infected by the *mania* of the moment ; but these appear, at least, by far the fewer number, and, probably from despair of opposing to any purpose, left the field of politics, and the character of the town, to the more active but, as usual, noisy and presumptuous order. — Those who know the former will do them justice ; but *the town* can only be known by its public acts. The *exceptionable part* of these I had wished, it appears, to pass without particular notice, even though some of them had *in form* returned thanks to our United Irishmen for their manifesto. But some of these gentlemen are too proud of their late political discoveries and works of faith and edification, and too confident of the benefit the world and their country must derive from the more general dissemination of them, to let them die the death of a news-paper. A *complete collection* of them, it seems, is shortly to appear. — I had thought parts of them, even for their sakes, better forgotten. — It seems I was mistaken. — But if these gentlemen continue so *itedfast* in *every article* of their creed, and so *zealous in making converts*, the more necessary is it for those who think it not the true *saving* faith, to guard both against the doctrines and the preachers.

“ TOO

“ TOO MUCH, NO RISK TOO-GREAT ; and NO re-
 “ form can ever be adequate, or useful, fatisfac-
 “ tory or just, unless ALL IRISHMEN OF EVERY
 “ DESCRIPTION, shall be EQUALLY and FAIRLY
 “ represented§,”—give us a reform, OR—“ You
 “ will be alone answerable to God and your
 “ country for *the consequences**,—you alone for
 “ *all the crimes and calamities* that may follow†,”
 —give us a reform—“ SAVE your country in mer-
 “ cy to YOURSELVES‡!” Such things have we gain-
 ed by leaders of that order, who classically address-
 ing the Volunteers || their “ *Fellow-soldiers*,”—

§ Proceedings of Belfast Town-meeting, December 26th,
 1792.

* Address of first Belfast Volunteer Company to the Vo-
 lunteers of Ireland, December 18th, 1792.—See also an
 address of the Belfast Volunteer Company, December 17th,
 of the same sort—“ If bad advisers or weak and wicked
 “ men *force* the people into *extremities*,—on THEM let all the
 “ miseries fall of civil convulsion.”

† Declaration and Principles of the Friends of Parliamen-
 tary Reform in Belfast, January 10th, to the 19th, 1793.

‡ Dublin United Irishmen,—Citizen-soldiers, to arms.

|| First Belfast Volunteer Company, to the Volunteers of
 Ireland, December 18th, 1792.

Citizens

Citizens now no more,—in another dread summons to arms, prefix in capitals,—“ YOUR COUNTRY IS IN DANGER !” intending no doubt,—for they must have either “ heard or read” that the words had a meaning to call on the people to appoint a *dictator*, or to become, every man of them, thenceforward a dictator,—to tell them that ALL LAW MUST CEASE,—if they would SAVE the REPUBLIC.

Such things have we gained by leaders who threatened the public enemy in their gazettes, with all their preparations for deadly war,—the drummers and trumpeters they *wanted*,—their rounds of ball-cartridge prepared and preparing *per man*,—their stores for cannon, as well as small arms,—their grape-shot and their canister-shot ;—and called on *France* still, and *French examples*, through all their manifestoes.—And when government *does*, at last, come down upon them, with an *intolerable law*, to prevent their so using such desperate artillery, and with an equally intolerable *soldiery*, to keep at their looms and in the counting-houses, or rather to keep *out* of the senate-house and out of temptation, these illuminated Citizen-soldiers,—then, lest either their former or present wishes should appear *ambiguous*,

B b

and

and because the wide world, if they were resolved on insurrection, afforded no *remaining* resources,—and to prove themselves equally wise politic and well-affected, and as capable of conducting, as willing, when necessary, to enter into any little sort of civil war,—they *hide* and *bury* their artillery and ammunition,—and having done so, set up a most piteous lamentation, or rant in all the dignity of stage-heroes,—at the abominable injustice done to them, and to their principles, in *suspecting* them!

I have now, gentlemen, with a freedom required equally, I thought, by my own character, propriety, and the peculiar circumstances of the times, laid before you and our countrymen, such details and observations respecting a popular convention, and a set of agitators, the original authors and contrivers of the measure, as may tend to explain the true spirit and principles of many of our people, in at least one most important part of the country, and of the men who seem very much to lead these people, and, if they can, will lead and govern the whole country.

If I am not much deceived, the subjects treated of require the serious consideration of every
 4 person

person not interested in our reform only, in itself a momentous subject, but in the existence of this nation as a free nation, or of the empire perhaps as powerful and prosperous. They furnish a body of evidence, in my mind not weak, that there *does exist* in this country a party, not contemptible for numbers or industry, though in appearance not very respectable for ability and prudence—(unless the power of perverting popular enthusiasm into frenzy be ability, or betraying that frenzy into gross indiscretion be prudence)—who, under the name of reform, aim at what would be, in fact, a popular revolution,—the establishment of a real democracy,—the commencement, or completion of which must be a dangerous, shall I merely say,—a *desperate civil war*; embittered and envenomed by a thousand causes of disunion and distraction to which France was not subject,—yet France has not to boast of a war of philosophy, forbearance and humanity.

“ But had you heard *him deliver it*,” said Echines, of an oration of Demosthenes against himself,—“ what *then*, my friends, would you have said of it?”—For my part, I cannot help wishing that many more capable than I of political research, and of penetrating the recesses of the

human mind, by observing not the words merely, but gestures, countenance, tone of voice, the whole manner, the whole man,—had lately *seen and heard* Dungannon. It would then be more clear whether or not I do it justice; whether I look on the whole business with any eye of, what surely ought not be expected from me, jaundiced aristocracy, or whether I am infected by what I should almost as little have suspected in myself, a puling or affected spirit of sickly sentimental philosophy. I think I felt not beneath the common standard of patriotic mind when the first Dungannon declared IRELAND SHOULD BE FREE. This was a subject we could all understand, and might all be permitted, to I know not what madness almost, to feel. I think too, Protestant as I am, if I know what Protestantism means,—that, had I been present in our late Catholic Convention, when they deliberated concerning *their* freedom,—had at any moment an impulse, unnecessary indeed but from some accident irresistible, seized the whole assembly,—had they risen as one man, and swords half unsheathed, cried with one voice, “WE WILL BE FREE,”—I think that here too, if a tear had started in my eye, it would not have been from the feelings of a slave or a coward.—This also was a subject that all men
could

could understand, nor would Catholics be men if they could have weighed it forever, and its maddening impulse, in the scales of slow reason or cold-hearted prudence.

But was our late Dungannon subject, *reform*, of that nature?—Is it so simple, so clear, so specific, so much *one*, defined, indivisible, *uncompromisable object*, purely and wholly good, without mixture of evil in any part of it,—good in itself, good in every tendency, and every consequence,—impressively obvious to every man's senses,—to be comprehended by every man's understanding,—to be embraced by every man's heart, who would not on his own forehead brand coward, caitiff, slave?—Who can affirm that it is all this?—And if no man can,—what aspect, to a thinking mind, must any thing like *precipitation of judgment*, any thing like *violence* or *intolerance* on the subject have? Must it always appear patriotic spirit, or political mind, or political determination, or soundness of understanding, or soundness even of heart? Or might it not *sometimes* wear the appearance of untaught rudeness, or system-excited upstart-swaggering pride, or fancied fullness of comprehension, or zeal that could most easily swell and darken into ferocity,
and

and whose judgments would be "*judgments of zeal* indeed,—seldom, alas, in any age or country, judgments of *justice*?—I could wish, therefore, that those who may look only on the *written resolutions* of our Convention, and may think some of them good, some tolerable, some perhaps "indifferent honest," some meaning little, and some possibly as well let alone, *had seen*, as I did, that they might for themselves judge of, the spirit that reigned;—had seen it in all its different yet sometimes, I thought, united forms of popular plainness and demagogue subtlety;—seen it, one might even fear, in *expressions* for the eye and ear, and *meanings* for the passions and understanding;—seen it in the gross and disgusting, I was going to add scandalous denial of the *existence* of certain principles in the country, which every man who had glanced over a newspaper, or read a single manifesto of our hot reformers, or listened to a single conversation, public almost or private, for now years I may say, *knew* to exist,—unless what simple men would call *republicanism* or *Paine-ism*, he should be pleased to call *legal liberty* and *the constitution*;—seen it not only in the acts done, and words used, but in that something inexpressible of *manner*, the index of the soul, which no words
can

can perfectly communicate or transfuse. And, that the ear too might bear its testimony, I could wish our observer had *heard*, not that unseemly found of disapprobation which issued once from the gallery, when the recent murder of Lewis was mentioned with a moment's sentiment and energy*—(for that was but the expression of some single perhaps unhappy individual, too wise to feel, or having his feeling all absorbed in a magnificent system of understanding)—but those well-applied, well-toned *bear'ems* which resounded from among ourselves occasionally,—the expressions at once of *thought* and *refinement*, and of all those *degrees* of each, which mark so strongly the present man, and seem to indicate what a small change of circumstances, a sudden accession of unlooked for dignity, “the cloathing of a little brief authority” *might* make of some of us modest men *in future*!—May Heaven remove far from the best among us all such trials!—Let us keep and cling to our stations, humble though many of them are,—and not, by aiming at the destruction of *artificial and political inequalities*, those of ranks and orders,—hereditary legislators and political corporations,—the

* By Mr. Knox of Derry.

causes,

causes, it must be confessed, of some evil, but the sources also of far ^{more} out-weighing, and amply compensating good,—introduce and give *despotic sway* to the infinitely greater *inequalities of nature*,—talents, abilities, knowledge, courage, cunning,——inequalities which, in a popular government, bear more intolerably a thousand times on *all beneath them*,—on mediocrity, on of course all below mediocrity,—on *the great multitude of the people*, including too often the truly great and truly good, who are seldom able, and if able would seldom condescend to meet at every winding and every turn, the artful and the unprincipled, ever-waking avarice, dream-haunted ambition, and the perseveringly restless herd of agitators, who ever hate that merit which despises, thwarts, and awes them, and who govern the vulgar because they are vulgar themselves, or will be *any thing* in order to succeed in governing;—inequalities producing scenes of villainy, barbarity, contest, convulsion, national misery, and in the end slavery, or entire national destruction, which when we review in history, with all its splendid single passages and single prodigies of men, we bless our more level and humbler perhaps, but infinitely safer, infinitely more civilized, and to the
multitude

(perhaps even to those comets of humanity that at times illumine our system) infinitely happier life, and pray that we may have no *heroes*, nor any *miserable occasion for heroes*, but live the life, and walk in the ways of *men*.

If the spirit of the late Dungannon Convention, or of those deep-thinkers who gave it a sickly existence, could reasonably be supposed *extinct* with the fame of the Convention itself, or with any thing that deserves the name of political character in its fathers of Dublin and its god-fathers and gossips of the North, I should be sorry to contribute, if it belonged to me so to speak, to making either of them the object of farther attention to the public. If I could confer on them an immortality of any kind, it should, for the honour of my country, be that of oblivion. But believing the spirit I have attributed to the Convention to be that *popular*, in other words *revolutionary* spirit which I have described;—believing it also to be the spirit of thousands in the Northern province, of I know not how many in other parts of the kingdom, of not a few indeed in this very city, the centre and source of every

species of illumination ;—believing that great numbers of the lowest order of the people have outstripped some of their teachers themselves in the “ dear ” doctrine of equality ;—convinced also that this spirit has rather acquired than lost malignancy from something of chastisement which it has lately received from government and the legislature, and that the *mode* of war only is to be changed from the open, bullying, and mad, to the more dangerous perhaps because more covert species, that would sap what it could not storm, deceive those it could not debauch, and convert every *punishment* of their own crimes, and every *defensive precaution* against their own declared hostility, into so many articles of national impeachment against administration for defending the Constitution, and against the Constitution which *permits* administration to defend it ;—firmly convinced of the truth of all these opinions, and that until this dark and restless spirit is, by some means or other, *laid*, the country can know neither prosperity nor peace, neither comfort nor security, I think it necessary thus to trace and pursue its underworkings, and to expose them, as far as my ability goes, to the light of day.

Whether

Whether it be that when a system of any kind is once embraced, every argument and fact against it is so turned and contorted as to become an imagined proof in its favour, I know not; but when I have heard that the Dungannon Meeting was now forgotten, I have said to myself,—so much the worse! Its *spirit* should be known, and yet a little longer remembered. When I have heard that the United Irishmen were forgotten—I have thought, so much the worse too, if the fact were so; unless their principles were forgotten with them.—But I have thought that they were too restless, some of them, or too bigotted to their absurdities, to allow either the one or the other to be forgotten.—I have heard also “that government was now become too strong, and “should not be further strengthened, the people too weak, and should now, if possible, be “raised.”—The propriety or impropriety of this observation depends on the sense of the word, *people*. In that sense, in which it is often used, I do for my part confess, that I should a thousand times rather see government strong, much stronger than even now it is, or is ever likely to be, than see the people *in force*. The strength of the people, whether they aim at what the majority of them would call a *real* or *radical reform*, or at a revo-

lution, in the establishment of a democracy, would be not simply the destruction of the Constitution, but the at least temporary destruction, and I believe perpetual diminution of *popular happiness*. But, in the true and proper sense of the words "*strength of the people*,"—the strength of the *people's rights*,—those rights *truly constitutional*, that will contribute to their *true liberty*, or to the object and consummation of all liberty, —*their true happiness*,—I too wish what is commonly called government less strong, and the people more so; and I think, besides, that the *true and only* way to make the people *thus* strong, and either to secure them the legal and constitutional rights they have, or to gain them others, is to teach them *how very dupes they have been*,—*wherewith they have been such*,—and *how they may be wise hereafter*. The people must reconsider many of their opinions or principles in respect to the Constitution and a reform,—they must see the political falsehood, inapplicability, and danger of many of these principles,—they must *un-king* and *un-lord* many of their little leaders, and take up again with their old king and old lords and older and better leaders,—they must, in short, see the errors of many of their ways, and retrace many of their steps, before they can expect to
be

be *at least constitutionally*, strong, before they can expect to be *assisted*, before, I will go so far as to say, they can expect not to be directly and boldly *opposed*,—by many of the truest and ablest friends of reform, and of the people themselves, that this country now contains, or ever perhaps did contain.

If they do not act so,—if they do not at least take some steps very different from what they have lately done, to evince a constitutional and peaceable, I will say *rational* spirit, they will oblige thousands of the warmest friends of liberty to make *the choice*, respecting which I, for one of its friends, should not for an instant hesitate;—to prefer the *free Constitution* we have, rather than attempt to make it more free by associating with men who do not understand what either the Constitution or liberty is, yet think themselves capable of making a constitution, or making a world. Or, if these gentlemen will still have it that the Constitution we live under is, either in law or fact, *a tyranny*,—then will they oblige us to prefer *of two tyrannies the cheaper and more moderate*; that which we have “without our stir,”—that of which we already know the extent,—that which we know we can bear,—

bear,—our *present* tyranny;—rather than fly to one illimitable in conceivable extent and duration,—the tyranny of *mobs and mob-leaders*,—for the gentlemen who can think so sensibly and respectably must themselves be of one or other of these respectable bodies,—not *one* tyranny, but a succession of anarchies, —“ *permanent revolution*,” and “ *sovereign insurrection*,”—each purchased, and each got rid of, by the blessed medium of a civil war, or the whole at last got rid of by sinking, not perhaps without convulsion, into the death-sleep of the soul, the destruction at least of all that can be called man in the heart,—a perfect despotism.

To point out to the people then, now that they are weak, if weak in truth they are, the errors that made them so, and the probable consequences of persisting in those errors, is not to add to their weakness, but to teach them how to recover, and how properly to apply, their strength. I trust this is not the office of an enemy. On the other hand, it is performing equally a duty to the government and legislature as to the people, to warn the former (as far as a very private individual may) what is the true spirit, or seems a strongly prevalent disposition, of the people
they

they have to govern; to warn them to oppose *at the first instant*, and as they would their own subversion, or anarchy itself, all popular attempts to command them; to warn them to govern first, even through that hated despotic thing *an army*,—and, if a *constitutional militia* please not these infatuated people, to give them *another army* in its stead,—less in numbers, but equally to be trusted perhaps, if the people should continue turbulent;—to warn them, lastly, to use this power as only the *first* and *necessary*, though *ungrateful* means of subduing popular frenzy, but to have recourse also, and that *instantly*, or as speedily as may be, to THE ONLY MEASURE which can finally and for ever soften, subdue, and disarm this half-reasoning, half-methodical madness,—that which must take from it all support or countenance from the property, character, integrity, and ability of the country, I mean a reasonable, moderate, and *unquestionably safe reform*. So may this civil storm blow over.

In the hope that a review of errors in the conduct both of our rulers and people, the more liable to criticism and correction from the recency of the facts, might tend to prevent some at least of their bad consequences, and to put
others

others in a way of being happily nay gloriously redeemed, have I written these sketches.—It is this idea, gentlemen, which has borne me up, permit me to say, under occasional disgusts at certain parts of the duty I had undertaken in these pages,—under occasional doubts too *how far*, on principles of public propriety and expediency, I should go;—how far I should probe the popular wounds, risking an eternal offence to popular wilfulness;—how far I should be justified in giving pain perhaps to any private feelings, in executing a possibly mistaken idea of public duty;—whether, in fine, having once stepped forward, inconsiderate ~~or~~ or not, I should go on, or should give my often suspended little labours to the flames.—I have gone on;—*ut cunque ferent ea facta!*—My love of country, such as it has been, not lessened, I can venture to say, by its imminent danger; my expectation of praise very moderate and very uncertain, of misconception and misrepresentation tolerably well assured, and of support or countenance from any party or any individual, no way assured, no way canvassed for. Having got into the business, nothing remained for me but to take myself out of it. I have done so, and have only to bear the

the consequences as I may. Yet do I declare myself no candidate for any species of martyrdom, and I have had some reason in my time to be a little sick of knight-errantry.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

with much respect,

your faithful

and most obedient Servant,

JOSEPH POLLOCK.

Dublin, June
15th, 1793.

The following is a list of the
 names of the persons who have
 been admitted to the office of
 the Secretary of the State since
 the 1st of January 1870.

1. John A. Smith, Secretary.

2. John B. Jones, Secretary.

3. John C. Brown, Secretary.

4. John D. White, Secretary.

5. John E. Green, Secretary.

6. John F. Black, Secretary.

7. John G. Gray, Secretary.

8. John H. Hall, Secretary.

9. John I. King, Secretary.

10. John J. Lee, Secretary.

11. John K. Miller, Secretary.

12. John L. Moore, Secretary.

